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THE

CORRESPONDENCE

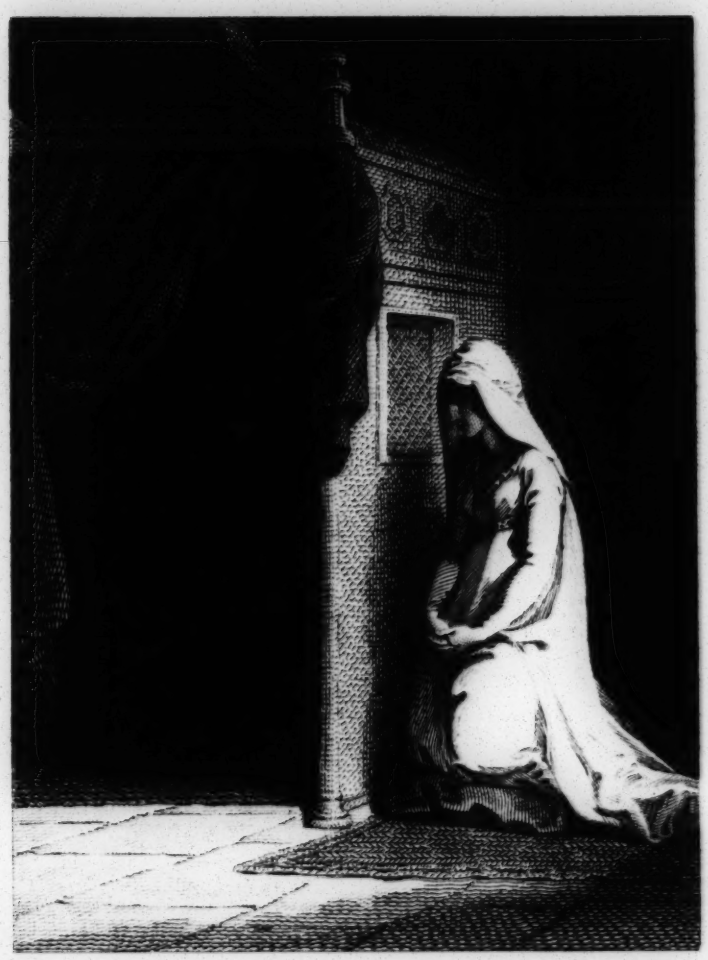
OF

THEODOSIUS

AND

CONSTANTIA.

Elinor Rowan January 1813



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Theodosius & Constantia.

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THE

CORRESPONDENCE

OF

THEODOSIUS AND CONSTANTIA,

FROM

THEIR FIRST ACQUAINTANCE

TO

THE DEPARTURE OF THEODOSIUS:

WITH

THE LETTERS

WHICH PASSED BETWEEN THEM AFTER CONSTANTIA HAD TAKEN THE VEIL.

A NEW EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY T. BENSLEY,

Bolt Court, Fleet Street;

FOR VERNOR AND HOOD, POULTRY; J. CUTHELL, HOLBORN;

AND H. L. GARDNER, STRAND.

1799.

ADVERTISEMENT.

As this volume may, possibly, fall into the hands of some who are yet unacquainted with the story of Theodosius and Constantia, it is thought necessary to print it here as related by the Spectator No. 164.

"Constantia was a woman of extraordinary wit and beauty, but very unhappy in a father, who having arrived at great riches by his own industry, took delight in nothing but his money.

"Theodosius was the younger son of a decayed family; of great parts and learning, improved by a genteel and virtuous education. When he was in the twentieth year of his age he became acquainted with Constantia, who had not then passed her fifteenth. As he lived but a few miles distant from her father's house, he had frequent opportunities of see-

ing her; and by the advantages of a good person, and a pleasing conversation, made such an impression on her heart as it was impossible for time to efface: he was himself no less smitten with Constantia. A long acquaintance made them still discover new beauties in each other, and by degrees raised in them that mutual passion which had an influence on their following lives.

"It unfortunately happened that, in the midst of this intercourse of love and friendship between Theodosius and Constantia, there broke out an irreparable quarrel between their parents, the one valuing himself too much upon his birth, and the other upon his possessions. The father of Constantia was so incensed at the father of Theodosius, that he contracted an unreasonable aversion towards his son, insomuch that he forbad him his house, and charged his daughter upon her duty never to see him more. In the mean time, to break off all communication between the two lovers, who he knew entertained se-

cret hopes of some favourable opportunity that should bring them together, he found out a young gentleman of a good fortune and an agreeable person, whom he pitched upon as a husband for his daughter. He soon concerted the affair so well, that he told Constantia it was his design to marry her to such a gentleman, and that her wedding should be celebrated on such a day. Constantia, who was overawed by the authority of her father, and unable to object any thing to so advantageous a match, received the proposal with a profound silence, which her father commended in her as the most decent manner of a virgin's giving her consent to an overture of that kind. The noise of this intended marriage soon reached Theodosius, who, after a long tumult of passions which naturally rise in a lover's heart on such an occasion, writ the following letter to Constantia.

'THE thought of my Constantia, which for some years has been my only happiness,

is now become a greater torment to me than I am able to bear. Must I then live to see you another's? The streams, the fields and meadows, where we have so often talked together, grow painful to me; life itself is become a burden. May you long be happy in the world, but forget that there was ever such a man in it as

THEODOSIUS.'

" This letter was conveyed to Constantia that very evening, who fainted at the reading of it; and the next morning she was much alarmed by two or three messengers, that came to her father's house one after another to inquire if they had heard any thing of Theodosius, who, it seems, had left his chamber about midnight, and could no where be found. The deep melancholy which had hung upon his mind some time before, made them apprehend the worst that could befall him. Constantia, who knew that nothing but the report of her marriage could have driven him

to such extremities, was not to be comforted: she now accused herself of having so tamely given an ear to the proposal of a husband, and looked upon the new lover as the murderer of Theodosius: in short, she resolved to suffer the utmost effects of her father's displeasure, rather than comply with a marriage which appeared to her so full of guilt and horror. The father seeing himself entirely rid of Theodosius, and likely to keep a considerable portion in his family, was not very much concerned at the obstinate refusal of his daughter, and did not find it very difficult to excuse himself upon that account to his intended son-in-law, who had all along regarded this alliance rather as a match of convenience than of love. Constantia had now no relief but in her devotions and exercises of religion, to which her afflictions had so entirely subjected her mind, that, after some years had abated the violence of her sorrows, and settled her thoughts in a kind of tranquillity, she resolved to pass the remainder of her days in a

convent. Her father was not displeased with a resolution which would save money in his family, and readily complied with his daughter's intentions. Accordingly in the twenty-fifth year of her age, while her beauty was yet in all its height and bloom, he carried her to a neighbouring city, in order to look out a sisterhood of nuns among whom to place his daughter. There was in this place a father of a convent who was very much renowned for his piety and exemplary life; and as it is usual in the Romish church for those who are under any great affliction, or trouble of mind, to apply themselves to the most eminent confessors for pardon and consolation, our beautiful votary took the opportunity of confessing herself to this celebrated father.

"We must now return to Theodosius, who the very morning that the above-mentioned inquiries had been made after him, arrived at a religious house in the city where now Constantia resided; and desiring that secrecy and concealment of the fathers of the convent,

which is very usual upon any extraordinary occasion, he made himself one of the order, with a private vow never to inquire after Constantia, whom he looked upon as given away to his rival upon the day on which, according to common fame, their marriage was to have been solemnized. Having in his youth made a good progress in learning, that he might dedicate himself more entirely to religion, he entered into holy orders, and in a few years became renowned for his sanctity in life, and those pious sentiments which he inspired into all who conversed with him. It was this holy man to whom Constantia had determined to apply herself in confession, though neither she nor any other, besides the prior of the convent, knew any thing of his name or family. The gay, the amiable Theodosius had now taken upon him the name of Father Francis, and was so far concealed in a long beard, a shaven head, and a religious habit, that it was impossible to discover the man of the world in the venerable conventual.

"As he was one morning shut up in his confessional, Constantia kneeling by him, opened the state of her soul to him; and after having given him the history of a life full of innocence, she burst out in tears, and entered upon that part of her story in which he himself had so great a share. 'My behaviour,' says she, 'has, I fear, been the death of a man who had no other fault but that of loving me too much. Heaven only knows how dear he was to me while he lived, and how bitter the remembrance of him has been to me since his death.' She here paused, and lifted up her eyes that streamed with tears toward the father; who was so moved with the sense of her sorrows, that he could only command his voice, which was broke with sighs and sobbings, so far as to bid her proceed. She followed his directions, and in a flood of tears poured out her heart before him. The father could not forbear weeping aloud, insomuch that in the agonies of his grief the seat shook under him. Constantia, who thought the good man was

thus moved by his compassion towards her, and by the horror of her guilt, proceeded with the utmost contrition to acquaint him with that vow of virginity in which she was going to engage herself, as the proper atonement for her sins, and the only sacrifice she could make to the memory of Theodosius. The father, who, by this time, had pretty well composed himself, burst out again in tears upon hearing that name to which he had been so long disused, and upon receiving this instance of an unparalleled fidelity from one who, he thought, had several years since given herself up to the possession of another. Amidst the interruptions of his sorrows, seeing his penitent overwhelmed with grief, he was only able to bid her, from time to time, be comforted; to tell her that her sins were forgiven her; that her guilt was not so great as she apprehended; that she should not suffer herself to be afflicted above measure. After which he recovered himself enough to give her the absolution in form; directing her at

the same time to repair to him again the next day, that he might encourage her in the pious resolution she had taken, and give her suitable exhortations for her behaviour in it. Constantia retired, and the next morning renewed her applications. Theodosius having manned his soul with proper thoughts and reflections, exerted himself on this occasion in the best manner he could, to animate his penitent in the course of life she was entering upon, and wear out of her mind those groundless fears and apprehensions which had taken possession of it; concluding, with a promise to her, that he would from time to time continue his admonitions when she should have taken upon her the holy veil. The rules of our respective orders, says he, will not permit that I should see you, but you may assure yourself not only of having a place in my prayers, but of receiving such frequent instructions as I can convey to you by letters. Go on cheerfully in the glorious course you have undertaken, and you will quickly find such a peace and sa-

tisfaction in your mind which it is not in the power of the world to give.

" Constantia's heart was so elevated with the discourse of father Francis, that the very next day she entered upon her vow. As soon as the solemnities of her reception were over, she retired, as it is usual, with the abbess, into her own apartment.

" The abbess had been informed the night before of all that had passed between her noviciate and father Francis, from whom she now delivered to her the following letter.

' As the first fruits of those joys and consolations which you may expect from the life you are now engaged in, I must acquaint you that Theodosius, whose death sits so heavy upon your thoughts, is still alive; and that the father to whom you have confessed yourself, was once that Theodosius whom you so much lament. The love which we have had for one another will make us more happy in its disappointment, than it could have done

in its success. Providence has disposed of us for our advantage, though not according to our wishes. Consider your Theodosius still as dead, but assure yourself of one who will not cease to pray for you in Father

FRANCIS.'

" Constantia saw that the hand-writing agreed with the contents of the letter: and upon reflecting on the voice, the person, the behaviour, and above all the extreme sorrow of the father during her confession, she discovered Theodosius in every particular. After having wept with tears of joy, ' It is enough,' says she, ' Theodosius is still in being; I shall live with comfort and die in peace.'

" The letters which the father sent her afterwards are yet extant in the nunnery where she resided; and are often read to the young religious to inspire them with good resolutions and sentiments of virtue. It so happened, that after Constantia had lived about ten years in the cloister, a violent fever broke out in the

place, which swept away great multitudes, and among others Theodosius. Upon his death-bed he sent his benediction in a very moving manner to Constantia; who at that time was herself so far gone in the same fatal distemper, that she lay delirious. In the interval which generally precedes death in sicknesses of this nature, the abbess, finding that the physicians had given her over, told her that Theodosius was just gone before her, and that he had sent her his benediction in his last moments. Constantia received it with pleasure: 'And now,' says she, 'if I do not ask any thing improper, let me be buried by Theodosius. My vow reaches no farther than the grave. What I ask is, I hope, no violation of it.' She died soon after, and was interred according to her request.

"Their tombs are still to be seen, with a short Latin inscription on them to the following purpose.

'Here lie the bodies of Father Francis and Sister Constance. They were lovely in their

lives, and in their deaths they were not divided."

Such is the story of Theodosius and Constantia, as related by Mr. Addison; on which I shall only observe that there is an interpolation in the letter written by Theodosius upon leaving his father's house. The passage where he says, "The streams, the fields, the meadows, where we have so often talked together, grow painful to me," is not genuine, which indeed might be evident to those who had not seen the original. Such romantic trifling is not the language of a heart in pain.

The letters of Theodosius and Constantia after she had taken the veil are supposed to be those which, in the foregoing story, are said to be still extant in the nunnery where Constantia resided. I am sensible that no apology need be made for publishing them in a country where the monastic life is justly condemned. The great principles of religious obedience are the same under every commu-

nion; and if these letters shall be found to contain any thing that tends to the melioration of the heart, or the enlargement of the mind; if they plead not idly in the defence of religious happiness; if, when the interests of futurity are opposed by temporary pursuits, the letters of Theodosius should throw any thing into the scale, I shall rejoice that upon this occasion I have not laboured in vain.

J. L.

CORRESPONDENCE.

LETTER I.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

Is it possible that Theodosius can approve the philosophy of Bernier? What would become of Christianity, were we to adopt the following creed? *L'abstinence des plaisirs me paroît un grand péché.* A sin to abstain from pleasures! what can he mean? Is not this perfectly the reverse of all moral and religious precepts? Are not abstinence, and mortification, and self-denial, echoed in our ears from the first dawn of reason? Are not we taught to guard against the prevalence of pleasures in general, and to look upon them as enemies under the mask of friendship? Consider them in a religious light, and they confessedly alienate the heart from its duty. The lovers of

pleasure cannot be lovers of God. The affections cannot be set on things above, while they tend to earthly objects. Consider their moral tendency, and they will be found to vitiate and debase the soul. Selfishness, and a neglect of the social duties, are inseparable from the pursuit of pleasures. These are jealous Gods, and demand from their votaries all the affections of the heart, all the attentions of the mind. They enslave the better faculties, and make the senses the tyrants of the understanding.

Surely the mind is too noble a province for such rulers; and, to me, the maxim of Bernier appears to be no less inconsistent with sound philosophy, than with true religion. I fancy you will find some difficulty to defend him in the opinion of

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER II.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

EVER amiable, and ever ingenious; pious in her inquiries, and modest in her conclusions; what a pleasure is it to accompany Constantia in the researches of truth and science! Clear in her conceptions, and acute in her expression, through the medium of her language we discover more clearly, even those sentiments that are not unknown to us. It assists the understanding in the same manner as the telescope aids the eye, and brings near the distant object.

Thus it is, Madam, that, while you call upon me to the decision of moral or religious inquiries, and place me in the dictatorial chair; after having invested me with the commission of a judge, like a skilful advocate, you in some measure qualify me for that office, by laying before me the whole merits of the cause.

When I praised the philosophy of Bernier,

I had not indeed forgot that singular maxim of which you have taken notice; but I was by no means aware that you would seize upon this eminence, and from thence discharge your artillery both on the philosopher and his encomiast.

Well, fair friend! since Venus is armed for the engagement, and has already made her attacks, she must expect to meet with a Diomede. But Theodosius, perhaps, will not be satisfied with his conquest, if, like the goddess of beauty, Constantia should retreat, wounded only in the hand.

Yes, my amiable moralist, I do approve the philosophy of Bernier; nay I adopt his creed too, and cordially declare with him, *L' abstinence des plaisirs me paroît un grand péché*. What is sin? Is it not to act contrary to the will of the Supreme Being? Beyond all doubt; where that will is known. Is it not evident that the benevolent Creator of the universe intended, and still intends, only the happiness of his creatures? This must be

allowed from the consent and the appearance of his works in general. And is not pleasure happiness? It must be so, or the term is vain. If then the Supreme Being intended principally the happiness of his creatures, and if pleasure be happiness; to abstain from pleasure, is to frustrate the intentions of Providence; to act contrary to his will; which is, confessedly, the very essence of sin, *L' abstinence des plaisirs est un grand péché.* It is a capital sin to abstain from pleasure, since it must have been the primary view of the divine beneficence to communicate pleasure to human nature.

To what other end was this pomp, this magnificence of beauty scattered over the visible universe? Is not this the language of nature, through all her smiling works? "Children, be happy; brought into existence by the command of that glorious being who is Love itself, your inheritance is pleasure, and it is your only duty to cultivate it well." Are they not, therefore, children of disobedience, who,

thus invited into the vineyard of pleasure, stand idle in the market-place, and vainly say, that no man hath employed them?

Hath God created a paradise, and will not man look around him to enjoy it; but, like his first parent, as described by the English poet, still pensively contemplate himself in the murmuring fountain? Shall he for ever seek his image in the waters of adversity; and shall the fair scenes of life be deformed through such a mirror?

Surely to abstain from pleasure is no inferior degree of guilt, since that very abstinence is a reproach to the eternal and invariable benevolence!

From whom do we derive every natural appetite? By whose wisdom were the fine organs of sensation formed? To whose bounty do we owe the objects of gratification? And to whose benevolence are we indebted for the capacity of enjoyment? Proceed not these powers and faculties from the great source of all things? Was not each adapted to its pe-

culiar function? And is not the neglect of these capacities a fault? Is not the mortification of them a crime?

By what means came pleasure into the world? Was it introduced by some malignant spirit? Did some demon contrive it for the destruction of mankind? That could not be; for no inferior being could have power to pervert the faculties and capacities of human nature. In such a case, the Supreme Creator must have been an imperfect being. He must have wanted the will to secure the happiness of his creatures; or, if he had the will, he must have been without the power to execute or establish it. Either of these suppositions it would be folly to admit. Pleasure, therefore, can only owe its origin to God, and its very name proves it to be of divine extraction.

And shall we refuse acquaintance with an object of heavenly descent? Shall we ungratefully bid the giver resume his gifts, or reproach him with the supposition, that he

would affect us with propensities we ought not to indulge?

Yes, Bernier, you are in the right. The renunciation of pleasure must be a sin; not only actually, but effectually a sin. The mind that refuses admittance to such a guest, must acquire a gloomy and unsocial habit; be fit only for the regions of monastic dulness, where lazy sanctity offers a preposterous devotion to that Being, who intended that we should rejoice in and partake of a general and social happiness.

When the bias of nature is opposed, when her sovereign dictates are broken, man becomes incapable of rendering any acceptable service either to his God, to society, or to himself! To his God he is ungrateful, nay, he insults him with a devotion more becoming the worshippers of Moloch, while he supposes him capable of delighting in cruelty, of afflicting his creatures, by giving them passions, which it should be a merit to mortify, and of tantalizing them, by requiring a rigid

abstinence from every inviting enjoyment that nature suggested. To the interests and affections of society he becomes cold and indifferent, when, what should principally engage him to them, the social desires of nature groan beneath the yoke of undelighted abstinence. Upon the same principles, he is an enemy to himself, to that being which was given him for his enjoyment, and which at last he shall render back to the giver, with "I knew that thou wert an hard master, therefore, the talent that thou gavest me I have made no use of: behold, here it is again."

O Pleasure! Thou first, best gift of eternal beneficence! Fairest and most beloved daughter of heaven, all hail! and welcome to sojourn on earth! A stranger thou art to every malignant and unsocial passion, formed to expand, to exhilarate, to humanize the heart!

But whither has my subject transported me? Have I lost sight of Constantia? that cannot be; for pleasure is my subject.

Yet, possibly, my amiable friend is, by

this time, more than half displeased. Where, says she, will this end? Has Theodosius conspired with Bernier to revive the school of Epicurus?

By no means, Madam! The pleasure we preach is not the offspring of chance, but the child of God.

The Epicuréan doctrine of pleasure is selfish; this that we would recommend is pious. From considerations respecting the uncertainty of this life, and the improbability of another, the Athenian philosopher, if we may believe his biographer, Laertius, taught his followers to pursue incessantly all that was called enjoyment. From reflections that are honourable to the eternal Providence; that conclude him to be the liberal giver of all that deserves the name of enjoyment, of the objects that gratify, and the faculties that enjoy; in obedience to his benevolent intentions, would we summon the world to the pursuit of pleasure, and convince it that the sun doth not shine in vain.

Nor will this doctrine, as my fair friend apprehends, be at all inconsistent with the pure precepts of that religion we profess.

For, after all, what is pleasure? Is it to be found at the table of riotous festivity, or in the venal arms of erratic love? Impossible! for these are the haunts of madness, of meanness, disgust, and folly.

Human pleasure is of a delicate temper. She disclaims all connexions with indecency and excess; she declines the society of untender desire, and of riot roaring in the jollity of his heart. A sense of the dignity of human nature always accompanies her, and she cannot admit of any thing that degrades it. Tenderness, good faith, modesty, and delicacy, are her handmaids; temperance and cheerfulness are her bosom friends. She is no stranger to the endearments of love; but she always consults her handmaids in the choice of the object: she never refuses her presence at the social board, where her friends are always placed on her right hand, and on

her left. During the time, she generally addresses herself to Cheerfulness, till Temperance demands her attention.

Let us now, Constantia, inquire whether this amiable being merits the charge that you have brought against her.

Will she alienate the heart from its duty? But how? Has it not already appeared, that she herself was sent from God, the best gift of infinite benevolence? It is only in the abuse, in the perversion of the gift, that the heart can be alienated from its duty.

The lovers of pleasure may, undoubtedly, be lovers of God. To be pleased with the gift, and not to love the giver, would be unnatural and ungrateful. Hence the charge of the inspired writer, that some were "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." What was this more or less than the charge of ingratitude?

The affections, you say, cannot be set on things above, while they tend to earthly objects. Literally, they cannot; but the best

devotion, that such an imperfect creature as man is capable of paying, is derived from his mortal feelings, perceptions, and enjoyments. When he finds himself happy in these, he is naturally led to adore that being who gave them; to look up with gratitude to him, and so far to set his affections on things above, as he has reason to hope for a happier allotment in an improved state of existence. Thus far even a regard to things on earth may assist his piety, and encourage his hope.

Our ideas of heavenly objects are extremely abstracted from sense, and yet it is difficult, through any other medium, to extend the affections to them. It has been observed, with philosophical truth, by one of the sacred writers, that "if a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how should he love God whom he hath not seen?" I will borrow his mode of reasoning, and will add, if a man love not those gifts of God which he hath seen, how should he set his affection on those which he hath not seen? If he hath not been

pleased with those enjoyments which the divine bounty hath allotted him, as peculiarly adapted to this state of being, what moral prospect can he have of being better satisfied in any future state?

But you quarrel with the moral tendency of pleasure, and load it with the heavy charge of vitiating and debasing the mind; adding, that selfishness, and a neglect of the social duties, are inseparable from the pursuit of it. Has not my friend made a misnomer here, in giving the name of pleasure to vice? Change the terms only, and the charge is just. It is impossible that innocent pleasures should vitiate, or that delicate enjoyments should debase the mind. It is impossible that those social delights which soften the heart should make it selfish, or exclude from its feelings a regard for the happiness of others.

If we look into the minds and manners of men, we shall find that not the very abstemious, the mortified, or the sanctimonious, are most distinguished for social virtues. The rea-

son, I think, is obvious: when innocent appetites and desires are restrained, the social affections languish under the same oppression. It is scarcely possible, that any man who admits of no enjoyments in himself, should be indulgent to those of others. We behold innumerable instances of this, both in those who cannot, and in those who will not enjoy.

The encouragement of pleasure, therefore, cherishes the social virtues; and he who is of a happy disposition himself, will be the first to promote the happiness of his neighbour.

Yet, will not pleasure enslave the better faculties, and make the senses the tyrants of the soul? No doubt, if the enjoyments of the mind are excluded; but the soul has its peculiar pleasures which may and ought to take their turn; and if the intellectual appetites are gratified, as well as the sensual and the social, the province of the mind will neither be uncultivated, nor be subject to the usurpation of invaders.

Pardon me, Constantia! When I write to you, I know not when to have done! Even now I lay down the pen with reluctance; even now, with a sigh, I subscribe

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER III.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

THERE is nothing more true, than that credulity is the foible of women. I have a violent inclination to believe every word you have said; as well your gallantry as your philosophy. Nay, I can hardly bewail the ruin of my poor arguments, though I have the vanity to think, that the breaches you have made in them might easily be repaired. However, you certainly had the happiest address to introduce your doctrine by the hand of flattery. The understanding of a woman is by nothing so easily vanquished as by the artillery of praise. If it be to your purpose to weaken it, give it the compliment of strength. If you would blind it, call it brighter than the day. The praise of a philosopher is really a most dangerous thing, and it is not in female fortitude to resist it. Accompanied with the ideas of truth and gravity, it makes its way to the

heart without opposition; and the sense and dignity of the speaker conspire with our natural love of it, to give it the sanction of sincerity.

Should I preclude all future compliments from the letters of Theodosius, and say no more than what is usually said upon such occasions, viz. that I could not deserve them, however true it might be, it would not save me from the charge of affectation; an imputation which, of all others, would be most dreadful to me! Frank-hearted let me be esteemed, and, though destitute of every other excellence, I shall not be the meanest of my sex.

But you see, my friend, I have given you serious, and, I hope, satisfactory reasons, why you should shut up the fountains of adulation; unless you think that they will give fertility to a barren soil. Assure yourself, I shall conclude this to be your opinion, if you pay any more compliments either to my person or my understanding.

I find no inclination to controvert any of the principles contained in your last. They are all amiable at least, if they are not solid; and, possibly, it may be nothing more than the prejudice of a narrow education, that would withhold any part of the credit due to them.

Ah, my friend; for, surely, you are my friend, if any confidence may be reposed in human appearances; pity the ignorance of a hapless girl, I had almost said an orphan, unassisted and uninstructed! Believe me, Theodosius, to your conversation I am indebted for almost all the valuable sentiments I have. You first taught me to think at large. You told me that liberty of opinion was as much a natural inheritance as personal liberty; that human nature had long groaned under the tyranny of custom; and that the worst species of captivity was the imprisonment of the mind.

Ever to be remembered is that distinguished lesson which, upon our first acquaintance,

you gave me in the grove of poplars. You politely pretended, that it was written by some other person for the instruction of some other lady; but I soon discovered in it the spirit and manner of Theodosius, and found it so well adapted to my own circumstances, that I could no longer doubt either for whom, or by whom it was written.

Notwithstanding this discovery, I must beg you will favour me with a copy of it; for that which you gave me has been destroyed, I believe, by the zeal and industry of father M——. Adieu!

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER IV.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

By supposing me to be the author of the following Letter, you have laid me under some disagreeable circumstances; but what would you conclude, should I, on that account, refuse you a copy of it; might you not justly charge me with that affectation which you so greatly despise? You shall have it, be the consequence what it will; Constantia commands, and Theodosius must obey.

THOUGHTS

ON THE

IMPROVEMENT OF THE MIND AND MANNERS,

ADDRESSED TO

A YOUNG LADY OF BOLOGNA:

BY A MEMBER OF THE ACADEMY DELLA CRUSCA.

" MADAM,

" The first step that a young lady can take towards improvement, is to be convinced

that she wants it. The mind is situated in such an obscure recess, and is so little the object of the senses, that it is a difficult matter to take a view of it at all, much more to behold it in its true light. Hence we are apt to believe it sufficiently furnished when desolate and empty; and to think it properly cultivated, though it produces little more than the rude growth of nature.

Better, however, is even that growth, than some artificial products. Better is the harvest of wild simplicity, than the rank and thriving crops that have been cultivated by the industry of folly!

"Of all the offensive weeds that are apt to spring up in a young mind, and to oppress its better fruits, affectation is the most destructive: where it takes root, the love of truth and nature perish unavoidably, and artifice and insincerity usurp their place. Qualities these are so infinitely odious, so perfectly opposite to all that is amiable or deserving of confidence, that, if a lady had an aversion to

being beloved, she could not find a more effectual antidote.

"Never, madam, have I known an affected woman possessed of any amiable, or any virtuous quality!

"The *Coccatrici* is not unknown to you. Behold in her, then, a most instructive lecture on the management of the mind! For the *Coccatrici*, with the best natural understanding, not uncultivated by books, is at pains to render herself the most odious woman in the world. Affectation has the absolute dominion both of her person and mind. Her words, her motions, her actions, her opinions, are all under the influence of affectation; all receive its ugly and disgustful stamp. Obscurely born herself, the *Coccatrici's* passion is quality. Without any very striking accomplishments of person, she affects the softness, the negligence, the languishments of beauty. These, and innumerable more absurdities arising from the same principle of affectation, render her the contempt

of your sex, and the jest of ours. Yet were ridiculous manners the only effect of this principle, the *Coccatrici* might be laughed at and pitied; but the same insincerity, the same deviation from truth and nature which produces these, has other consequences that render her detestable: she is scurrilous and treacherous; nor is this to be wondered at. A mind which affectation has alienated from every natural principle of simplicity loses at the same time the social virtues, and becomes indifferent to the interests and the reputation of others.

" Of no simple ingredients is this character composed. Forbidding pride, ridiculous vanity, insidious insincerity, virulent malignity, make a part of the composition of the *Coccatrici.*

" Characters are always the best comments upon precepts. In the *Coccatrici,* madam, you behold by what odious qualities a polished understanding may be debased.

" For the improvement of the manners,

therefore, something more must be necessary than the mere acquisition of knowledge; and this something I take to be the cultivation of benevolence and sincerity. An infinite number of virtues will spring from these valuable roots. The love of humankind will make you a friend to every fellow-creature; and, together with the approbation of your own heart, general esteem and admiration will be your reward. The love of truth will always save you from affectation, and all its disagreeable consequences. Sacrifice at the shrine of Nature, and rather borrow from her your manners and sentiments, than from the fantastic humours of Fashion. From her, likewise, borrow your knowledge, and not from the labours of the schools. She will give you no narrow or illiberal ideas of her great author. Be such writers, therefore, your study, as have made her theirs; such as have shewn the wisdom, the œconomy, the prudence, the benevolent purposes of her works. The contemplation of such objects gives the mind a

large and liberal turn; lays a foundation for the most rational piety, and reconciles us to the allotments of life, when we behold the superintendence of a wise and benevolent power over every department of the universe.

" Next to natural philosophy, the history of humankind will merit your attention. Various are the advantages to be derived from this course of reading. A celebrated writer of antiquity has observed, that he who is ignorant of what happened before his own times, is still a child. Before I had made a competent acquaintance with history, I never could read this passage without pain and shame. I imagined that the eyes of the great Orator were upon me, and that I appeared childish before him. I am now extremely well convinced, that what he observed was comparatively just.

" Ignorance is the characteristic of childhood; and the mind that is uninformed, at whatever period of life, is still in a puerile state.

"From the knowledge of past events and their causes; from attending to the economy of providence in the external and internal government of the world; by tracing the progress of science, and the gradual improvement of the mind; we learn to form just conceptions of human actions and opinions, to make the best use of reason in foreseeing the consequences of principles yet unpractised, to enlarge and liberalize our religious sentiments while we contemplate the Supreme Being in the capacity of an universal parent, and to see what moral perfection the human mind is capable of when man, in his savage, and in his civilized state, is distinctly presented to our view.

"These, madam, are inquiries worthy of a rational creature; worthy of that acute and penetrating genius which the liberal hand of Nature has given you!

"Make an adequate use of her generous and valuable gifts. Despise the sneer of superficial foppery, that is ever jealous of superior

sense, and dreads the knowledge of a woman, on account of its own ignorance. If you are not without hopes of being united to a man of an accomplished mind, qualify yourself for his company. Let him not be obliged to consider his wife merely as a domestic, useful in her appointment; make him esteem her as a rational companion, whose conversation may enliven the hours of solitude, and who, with a mind not vacant, or unfurnished, may, like the householder in the gospel, 'bring forth out of her treasure things new and old.'

"To what a despicable state would your sex be degraded by those monopolizers of dignity and knowledge, who would debar you from both! What! were reason, and reflection, and memory, and every other faculty that is adapted to literary improvements, given to you, as they are given to us, by a different author, or for different purposes? Mean fallacy in our sex, that would establish the worst species of tyranny over you, the tyranny of the mind! Groundless and illiberal fear in

man, that he should lose his dignity in the eyes of a woman who was not inferior to him in sense! Is it the property of cultivated minds to hold cheap the accomplishments of others? Is it not from such minds only that they can meet the respect due to their merit? He who is afraid of marrying a woman that is not absolutely ignorant, gives a fair proof, at least, that such is not his own case.

"There are provinces in which our sex may properly acquire and maintain a superiority of knowledge, and in which it would not be worth your while to excel. There are, likewise, certain departments in which you should claim, unrivalled, the compliment of excellence; but the cultivation of the mind should be equally the care of both, since nature has given to both minds equally capable of cultivation.

"It was natural for me to digress, when I was pleading in favour of the privileges of your amiable sex!

"To an acquaintance with natural and civil

history, you will do well to join the lighter and more amusive entertainments of the *Belles Lettres*. The study of the former will enrich, that of the latter will embellish, the mind. From works of taste and harmony we derive a kind of mechanical virtue, and learn to admire what is truly beautiful and harmonious in moral life. The genius of poetry has a softening and humanizing influence on the mind; and its pathetic powers increase that charming sensibility, that enthusiastic tenderness and delicacy of affection, which renders your lovely sex so justly the delight and admiration of ours.

" I mean not, however, that by this kind of reading you should soften your mind, so much as form your taste, by admiring and attending to what is perfectly beautiful in one of the finest arts of imitation.

" This art is so naturally adapted to cultivate that harmony which the academics of old esteemed the essence of moral virtue, that I was always at a loss to know why Plato

would have poets banished his commonwealth, till convinced it was because they hurt the interests of religion, and injured the dignity of the gods, by the sportive sallies of the muse.

" After all, madam, whatever proficiency you may have it in your power to make in literary accomplishments, forget not that the qualities of the heart are infinitely preferable to those of the head. Should you be unable, for want of assistance or opportunity, to furnish your mind with the treasures of antiquity; to acquaint yourself with the philosophy of nature; or to embellish your taste by the more polished labours of genius; remember that you still have it in your power to make yourself amiable by a sweetness of disposition, by an openness of heart, and simplicity of manners."

Thus far, Constantia, the grave academician. You will now, I hope, not be unwilling to take up the lighter carriage of the friend.

Ah! name, replete with tenderness! Comprehensive of every kind, every faithful sentiment! "Surely you are my friend," did you say? Yes, Constantia, believe it, evermore believe it. If every ardent wish for your happiness, every active impulse to serve and oblige you; if the highest esteem, and the tenderest regard, may be allowed to constitute the most essential part of friendship, surely Theodosius is the friend of Constantia.

Yet, too generous in your acknowledgments; too liberal even in your ideas of gratitude; why will you attribute to me any part of your accomplishments? Alas! what am I? The little virtues I have, if any I have, I borrow from Constantia, and, by continually contemplating her perfections, I acquire, as it were, a habit of imitating them.

Can I make a better use of these uncheerful hours that I am doomed to pass at a distance from the friend of my heart? *Dans ces retraites solitaires*, I find no other consolation than what writing to or thinking of her affords me.

Why those needless prohibitions of praise? Why should Constantia forbid her friend to compliment either her person or her understanding? The former has no need of, and the latter is above all compliment!

What luxury in the indulgence of this growing tenderness! Ah precious luxury! perhaps, forbidden!

Adieu! Adieu!

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER V.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

EVER generous, and obliging; but, possibly, too tender! Yet shall I blame my friend for his tenderness? Surely, no; but why "forbidden?" what does that mean? shall the intercourse of friendship be forbidden? I cannot think of that; I cannot, must not lose the friendship of Theodosius.

You have my most grateful thanks for the academician's letter, which I will endeavour to secure from the inquisition of father M——. The good man has a strange aversion to every thing that tends to open the understanding. Yet why would he keep one in the dark? Can it be of any advantage to him? In my opinion, the academician, or, with your leave, Theodosius, has incontestibly proved the female right to learning.

This, beyond all doubt, provoked the worthy father's zeal, whom I have heard say,

that all knowledge was invested in the church. Would to heaven that the church would be liberal for once, and dispense a little of that knowledge to an ignorant girl, who would be no less thankful for that than for its prayers.

Will you, my friend, forgive me, when I tell you, that I have frequently wished you had been in holy orders, and appointed my confessor instead of father M——? I flatter myself you would have indulged me with works of learning and imagination, and would not have confined my poor library to *Oraisons* and *Notre Peres* alone.

Pray tell me, my philosopher, you that know the human mind, do not you think that the professors of religion hurt its interests, by pursuing them too closely? Suppose they should now and then afford us a little respite! Suppose they should diversify our reading and our studies; should we not return to the attentions of religion with greater alacrity?

All these churchmen, however, are not equally contracted in their opinions. I have

lately stolen the reading of a very delightful book, which, I have been informed, was written for the entertainment and instruction of the duke of Burgundy, by the present Archbishop of Cambray, his preceptor. I have, moreover, been told that the publication of this book was effected by the treachery of a domestic, and that it brought fresh inconveniences on the prelate already in disgrace!

In what a miserable condition is human reason, when liberal sentiments will bring a man into disgrace! Adieu!

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER VI.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

I REJOICE that you are become acquainted with the new publication of M. Fenelon, the most amiable philosopher that ever Europe produced! His affluence of imagination; his glowing and impassioned sentiments; the attic sweetness and delicacy of his style; but, above all, that delightful enthusiasm, which, worshipping at the shrine of simple and beautiful nature, makes every reader a convert to her principles; all these qualities give to Fenelon the palm of philosophy among the moderns.

I mourn with my generous Constantia, I mourn his disgrace; for it is the disgrace of my country. It is not for Fenelon we need repine. Reconciled to every event by the *adoucissement* of philosophy, is he not more happy in the confines of Cambray, than he could be if, caressed amongst the number of favourites, he yet breathed the unwholesome

air of a court? Zealous in the discharge of his pastoral duties, a friend to humankind from principle, busy in the exercise of beneficence to all orders, and all societies of men, who is so happy, or so great as Fenelon?

Like some fair ſtar that shoots its evening ray
Brighter along the dim wood's opening way,
So Fenelon, by favouring courts admir'd,
More feebly shone than Fenelon retir'd.

Think not, Constantia, that I am partial to this illustrious man, because I have the honour and the happiness of his friendship. The following substance of a conversation, that once passed between us, will convince you, that I have given you no flattering picture of him.

MR. DE FENELON.

My regard for you, Theodosius, makes me wish your happiness; and if my longer acquaintance with life may entitle me to give you my advice on that subject, I will not be sparing of it.

THEODOSIUS.

Sir, you will do me the greatest favour. I have hitherto been a stranger to misery; and if you would instruct me how to preserve the happiness I enjoy, methinks you need only tell me how I may deserve the continuance of your friendship.

MR. DE FENELON.

On that you may at all times rely. But our friendships, like every thing else that we enjoy, are subject to the influences of chance and time. I will give you the best proof I can of mine, therefore, while I have it in my power.

The life of man has many cares belonging to it; but the first and greatest care is that of the immortal soul. We cannot be too attentive to the interests of a Being that shall endure for ever, and to place any other in the scale against these, would be absolute folly.

THEODOSIUS.

My Lord!

MR. DE FENELON.

But you cannot want convictions of this kind. Yet there is one particular care respecting the soul which may not have occurred to you.

THEODOSIUS.

I beg to be informed of it.

MR. DE FENELON.

Have not you observed the progressive improvement of the mental faculties, from the first dawn of reason, to the decline of life?

THEODOSIUS.

That improvement must be obvious to every eye; but some of those faculties seem to decline with life itself: the imagination frequently languishes under the weight of years; the powers of reason and reflection are,

many times, almost wholly lost; and the memory is entirely effaced. So far the perfection of the soul seems to depend on the perfect state of the body.

MR. DE FENELON.

As the body is merely the habitation of the soul, its tenant can no longer occupy those apartments that are ruinous, or decayed by time or accidents. Hence some of the mental faculties seem to be annihilated, when they are only suspended; thus oftentimes we may vainly solicit the memory for an object to-day, with which it will voluntarily present us to-morrow. An intelligent nature cannot suffer from material influences, and therefore may exist independently of them. Nay, it may exist in the perfection of its powers, though those powers, for want of their proper vehicles, are not called forth.

THEODOSIUS.

I conceive the possibility of this, and am

now impatient to be informed, what new care it is which has the soul for its object.

MR. DE FENELON.

As the faculties of the soul are continually improveable, and cannot be destroyed by what happens to the body, it is probable that in whatever state of comparative perfection they are, upon quitting this mode of being, in the same they will pass into another which, though higher, shall be still improveable like the former.

THEODOSIUS.

What would you infer from hence?

MR. DE FENELON.

That, next to the exercise of virtue, the improvement of the mind ought to be our principal care: for as the former will entitle us to an improved state of being, so the latter will qualify us for the enjoyment of it. From the benevolence of the Supreme Being, as

well as upon the principles of reason and philosophy, we have a right to hope that the soul, when it quits the body, will not revert to that state of ignorance in which it appears to be when it first informs it.

THEODOSIUS.

This is a very pleasing conclusion, and suggests to me a variety of agreeable reflections.

MR. DE FENELON.

I have received great satisfaction from the contemplation of it. It is pregnant with many circumstances of comfort. When we have been toiling for the acquisition of knowledge, we may have the pleasure to conclude, that we have not been "labouring for the bread that perisheth; but for that which endureth unto eternal life." It must be the greatest consolation to reflect, that the mental improvements we make shall last beyond the grave, and that the treasures of knowledge we lay up here, we shall enjoy hereafter.

If we have contributed by our own writings to the advancement of science and the cultivation of the mind, what a glorious reflection does it afford, that these effects will last for ever; that the souls which have received new lights, new information from our discoveries, shall retain them in every successive period of being; and that thus we shall have contributed to the perfection of glorified natures and everlasting intelligences! There is something ravishing in the thought: I am transported; I feel a godlike pleasure in the indulgence of it.

THEODOSIUS.

You, my good Lord, who have contributed so greatly to the cultivation of the human mind, have a right to all the pleasures that such reflections can afford; and great, indeed, and adequate to the dignity of human nature, are the objects of complacency that attend them. But, for my own part, I have always thought, that every improvement the

mind could make in this state of being, would be superfluous in another; that its faculties would be infinitely enlarged, and that at the command of Omnipotence it would make a quick transition to the angelic nature.

MR. DE FENELON.

For such suppositions, however common they may be, I apprehend we have little more or better authority than what self-flattery will afford us: it appears, and has ever appeared to me, more probable that the soul should arise to a state of such perfection as we conceive of the angelic natures, by more regular gradations than are usually assigned to it.

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Here our conversation was interrupted by a letter from Madame Guyon; which while the good prelate was perusing with visible eagerness, I retired into the garden, and was led into the following melancholy reflections.

" How affecting is it to observe, that the most enlightened minds make the nearest ap-

proaches to certain degrees of madness, or of weakness! Genius seems to be the child of enthusiasm; and yet enthusiasm is frequently the disgrace, the ruin of genius. The archbishop of Cambray, the literary ornament of Europe, distinguished for the most pure, the most refined philosophy, is carried away by the dreams of fanaticism, and attends to the ravings of an insane devotée; for such is this Madame Guyon!"

After walking some time alone, I was again joined by the archbishop, who, with that calm benignity of countenance peculiar to him, resumed the conversation. What followed would stretch this letter too far. Expect an account of it in my next.

Adieu!

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER VII.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

MR. DE FENELON.

You will excuse me, Theodosius; a letter from Madame Guyon always commands my attention. That seraphic woman seems to have obtained a kind of beatification; and I look upon an address from her as it were a voice from heaven. But I will not solicit your attention to a subject which has given occasion to so many unhappy disputes. I will pursue my purpose of giving you the best instructions I am able to give you, with regard to your conduct and your happiness.

Before we can tread the stage of life with that gracefulness and propriety which render every character easy and agreeable, it is absolutely necessary that we should acquire a considerable knowledge both of mankind and of ourselves. This knowledge is not hastily, or easily to be obtained. We must have mixed

with society, and have attended to the different forms that the passions and pursuits of men assume in different characters, before we can form any judgment of them that shall be generally adequate. I have known some men of so keen a penetration, that they have been able to judge of characters almost intuitively; but hasty decisions, though they may often be right, may likewise many times be wrong; and they never ought to have the least weight with us in any thing that may concern the reputation or the interest of the person we so judge of. What I would observe is, that there are methods of acquiring a readiness of judging; and that such an acquisition must be of great use to us in the commerce of life. The only means I know of are those I mentioned to you, to attend to and learn the different forms that the passions assume in different characters.

THEODOSIUS.

And yet, my Lord, may not an artificial

department frequently render such an inquiry vain?

MR. DE FENELON.

It may sometimes perplex it, but will seldom render it vain; even artifice itself takes a colour from the passions, and they may be read and distinguished in its operations.

THEODOSIUS.

Thus you would instruct me to know men in general; but may there not be a more particular process of inquiry, where a more particular knowledge of individuals is necessary? I should be glad to be informed how I might obtain a thorough knowledge of the man I could wish to make my friend.

MR. DE FENELON.

For this different methods have been recommended, and different experiments have been tried. Some have had recourse to the chymical process of the bottle, and others to

a fictitious distress; but both to no valuable effect. The first did not consider that a man deprived of reason is no longer a man; and the last had not reflected, that, on certain occasions, a man might want the power, though he wanted not the will, to relieve the distresses of his friend.

If you would obtain a perfect knowledge of any man, it must be from his domestic character. Such a father, master, brother, son, or husband, as he shall be found, such a friend will he be. It is, moreover, in the minuter circumstances of his conduct that we are to inquire for a man's real character. In these he is under the influence of his natural disposition, and acts from himself; while in his more open and important actions he may be drawn by public opinion, and many other external motives, from that bias which nature would have taken.

Were I once more to make choice of a friend, the first qualities I would look for in him, should be sincerity and sensibility: for

these are the foundation of almost all other virtues.

THEODOSIUS.

Stop not here, my Lord, I intreat you; but tell me how that self-knowledge is to be acquired, the acquisition of which you have allowed to be so essential to our happiness.

MR. DE FENELON.

There is no study so necessary as this; and yet, unfortunately, there is none so difficult. Self-knowledge, like that Hesperian fruit which was defended by the vigilance of sleepless dragons, is surrounded by so many powerful guards, that it is almost inaccessible. Indulge me a moment, Theodosius, in my favourite province of allegory. The most assiduous of these guards is Vanity, and, at the same time, the most artful. If you are determined to have access, she has address enough to impose upon you, and, instead of Self-knowledge, to present you with

a different object, fair, indeed, and beautiful to look upon, but very unlike the figure you ought to have seen. Pride stands, a dangerous centinel, at the gate of Self-knowledge: when you demand admittance, he seats you on a throne, and bids you look down on the crowds that surround you; you look with complacency, and return with ignorance. Should the arts both of Pride and Vanity be ineffectual, there is yet another redoubt to be attacked, which is defended by Self-deception. This is the subtlest of all the guards that surround the tree of Self-knowledge: in her hand is a waving mirrour that turns every way, which so dazzles and confuses the sight, that you cannot possibly distinguish the real object you aim at, from the images reflected in her mirrour; at length, with one of those images you return, satisfied and deceived.

THEODOSIUS.

These, indeed, make a formidable guard. How shall they be overcome?

MR. DE FENELON.

Only by the assistance of Truth. As the machinations of inferior enchanters vanish upon the appearance of an abler magician; or, rather, as the *diableries* of infernal spirits are destroyed by the influence of a celestial; so Pride, Vanity, and Self-deception, fly from the approach of Truth.

THEODOSIUS.

Yet is it not, my Lord, a matter of difficulty, to engage this valuable auxiliary?

MR. DE FENELON.

Or, rather, to persuade ourselves to employ him; for there the difficulty lies: before he can be brought over to our party, he requires so many mortifying concessions, that we reject his services, because we are unwilling to purchase them at so dear a rate.

THEODOSIUS.

Yet surely, my Lord——

MR. DE FENELON.

They are but imaginary possessions that he requires us to part with. It is very true; and, for that reason, one would think the terms not hard. The dominions of Vanity, like the gardens of Armida, are purely ideal, and may be given up without loss.

THEODOSIUS.

And yet, possibly, we are indebted to this same Vanity for half the happiness we enjoy. Does not the whole art of happiness consist, principally, in being well deceived?

MR. DE FENELON.

You have drawn me upon a rock that I wished to avoid. For the sake of truth and virtue, I am willing to persuade myself that it is not so; certainly we are not deceived when we derive our happiness from the cultivation of these. At the same time, I will own that, such is the weakness of hu-

man nature, there are a thousand *douceurs* necessary to give a relish to life, in the composition of which deceit has a principal hand. But what the English poet calls "The sober certainty of waking bliss," that must undoubtedly flow from the exercise, or the reflection, of what is real and substantial.

THEODOSIUS.

It should seem, then, that there are two sources of happiness: one from which the imagination derives fancied entertainment and unreal pleasure; another that, arising in conscious virtue, yields to reason and reflection a more genuine delight.

MR. DE FENELON.

Evidently; and we may drink at both these soursces: but we should make it our care, that the fountains of imaginary pleasure contain nothing that may tend to inebriate or disorder the mind.

THEODOSIUS.

Can they ever be attended with such consequences?

MR. DE FENELON.

Too frequently they are. The imagination may be indulged, till it shall acquire an habitual empire over the understanding. A man whose genius and temper are naturally warm and fanciful, may give himself up so entirely to the sweet influences of enthusiasm, that the powers of cool reason and discernment shall be greatly invalidated, if not wholly suspended.

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Imagine, my Constantia, how this speech affected me. At that moment the affair of Madame Guyon occurred to me, and I wept to think, that my amiable instructor, in his own person, bore testimony to the truth of his observation.

The remaining part of our conversation, with my answer to some passages in your last letter, shall follow this without delay.

Adieu!

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER VIII.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

I CONCEALED my tears as well as possible, while the good prelate thus proceeded.

MR. DE FENELON.

Every principle acquires force and influence from habit; and if it be, as it certainly must be, for our happiness to live under the dominion of reason, we should take care to exercise and consult it upon every occasion. Thus it will acquire strength and efficacy, and our obedience to its dictates will become easy from habit.

THEODOSIUS.

The dictates of Reason are undoubtedly the laws of life. But, in general, my Lord, how impotent and ineffectual! What avails her legislation, when the will, the executive power, seems not to be in her interest?

MR. DE FENELON.

The will must be gained over by art and management. Where Reason has not established her empire, she must do it by degrees, exert her authority in little and indifferent things, make mock-fights with the enemy, and have recourse to every other gradual and persuasive method which are made use of to reconcile us to tasks of difficulty.

THEODOSIUS.

This method, indeed, my Lord, is the most promising; but it seems that we either want skill, or inclination, to apply it. We always consider Reason as imposing her dictates with a magisterial spirit. She seems to approach us with an air of rigid honesty, rude and unpolished as the dictators from the plough.

MR. DE FENELON.

And did the same simplicity of manners

which distinguished the age of Cincinnatus prevail at this day, she would be as successful too. Alas, Theodosius! to the loss of that simplicity, to our deviation from nature, we owe the greatest part of those evils whereof we complain. I think the precept most essential to the happiness of human life is, "Live agreeably to nature."

THEODOSIUS.

This precept, my Lord, appears to want a comment. May I have the happiness to hear the Archbishop of Cambray preach from such a text?

MR. DE FENELON.

Nature herself will here be the best commentator. She, as well as Reason, seems to have her conscience in the human mind, which fails not to reproach us with every breach of duty.

Alas, my friend! how often do we do violence to Nature, and cast her dictates be-

hind! What artificial miseries do we lay up for ourselves from the indulgence of imaginary wants! We are not content to search for happiness within the sphere of Nature; it appears to be barren and insipid: we fly for it into the more specious and splendid circle of art; we are amused and dissipated in the search; but we never find the object we are in quest of. At length, weary and disappointed, we look back to the long forsaken walks of Nature; sorry that ever we deserted them, and ready enough to compliment them with those pleasure-yielding qualities which we should now be glad to find. But this last hope proves frequently vain: by being long accustomed to artificial habits, we have lost all taste for simplicity, and what might easily have engaged our affections when young, we behold with aversion in the decline of life.

THEODOSIUS.

I understand you, my Lord. You would advise me to cultivate the love of Nature, and

to plan my life upon her simple model, while yet I am young.

MR. DE FENELON.

I would, for the reasons I have already mentioned; because in her walks you will find the only genuine, the only home-felt happiness; which, however, you will be incapable of attaining, should you defer the application till the habits of artificial life have deprived you of all relish for natural enjoyments.

THEODOSIUS.

The wisdom and experience of my venerable instructor would be sufficient to convince me of the truth of these observations; but I think I have, within the little limits of my own attention, seen the last confirmed in many instances.

MR. DE FENELON.

It must be obvious to every person who

makes the least remarks on life, that those who have long lived in the circle of vanity can never quit it. Not that they still find their account of pleasure in it; but that they are unfit for, and incapable of, any other mode of enjoyment. What veterans do we behold busy in the pursuit of the most contemptible trifles! What a disgrace to human reason, to behold a countenance, furrowed with age, distorted with chagrin over an unsuccessful game! How disgustful to hear a matron, weighed down with years, discoursing like a girl on the frippery of modes! These are the unavoidable effects of pursuits habitually vain.

But when I would advise you, Theodosius, to live agreeably to nature, it is not alone that I would save you from frivolous pursuits and fantastic follies. Life is not to be left unactive; and by escaping seduction into the path of vanity, you will, of course, take that of wisdom. To do this, indeed, and to live agreeably to nature, are terms of almost

the same meaning. For the end of wisdom is a rational and lasting happiness, which is only to be found in acting conformably to the purpose of our existence, and in treading in those paths of truth and simplicity which nature has pointed out.

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Here my ever revered instructor ended his welcome lessons. I could have spent a life in hearing him; and thereby should have found that happiness which he taught me how to obtain.

Two ends are answered by thus committing his precepts to writing; which I have done without much difficulty, as they are yet fresh upon my memory. The pen is an excellent memorialist; and, while I am writing them for you, I establish them more securely in my own mind. At the same time, I am convinced that Constantia will neither find

them unentertaining, nor altogether useless, even in her own service.

Let me now turn to your last dear letter, which is not yet three days old, though so much has been written since I received it.

Alas, my Constantia! (I address you as my heart suggests) this delightful intercourse may not be of any long continuance, notwithstanding your kind and tender solicitude, that our friendship may not be interrupted.

The fathers of Constantia and of Theodosius, though their situation in some measure draws them into a specious interchange of civilities, are of tempers and sentiments so extremely different, that, whenever they meet, methinks I can discover in each a stifled contempt of the other. This gives me inexpressible mortification, as I am sensible that this contempt in both arises from motives equally insignificant; the one valuing himself on the superiority of his fortune, the other on the advantages of his birth.

Mistaken men! What are the distinctions

that place one man above another? Not wealth, or titles, certainly. Genius, wisdom, and virtue alone, have this distinguishing power; for these alone are capable of enlarging and ennobling the mind, and of exalting the human capacity as high as it will go.

How long this smothered contempt will be suppressed by politeness, I tremble to think. Upon the least failure of respect in either party, it will burst into a storm—and—ah! then, my fair friend! then, farewell this dear and happy intercourse of letters! Farewell the delightful freedom of our morning conversations! The sweet *sejour* at noon,

> Sotto le fresche fronde
> Del fresco faggio——

and the walk at evening through breathing bean-fields. Ah! enchanting walks, Constantia! when fancy, heightened by the surrounding beauties of nature, gave to all our discourse the happiest enthusiasm!

Should I not tremble even at the possibility of losing a happiness like this?

But let us not afflict ourselves with distant evils! (O that they were far distant!) I will think no longer of them, but, quitting those tenderly anxious thoughts which the beginning of your kind letter suggested, will proceed to that part of it where you obligingly propose a question, and call upon me for an answer.

I am, indeed, of opinion, that the professors of religion hurt its interests by pursuing them too closely; particularly when they make a merit of unnatural and unnecessary severities. Yet this unfortunate doctrine has thrown its galling weight on the easy yoke of Christianity almost ever since its publication. The fathers, those fathers in whom the church has placed such an implicit confidence, gave to that religion, which was meant to enlarge and humanize the mind, the meanest and most contracted spirit and principles. Some disgraced it by the vilest

quibbles [a] and misquotations; others loaded it with the most superfluous severities, forbidding the use of natural and lawful pleasures [b]; nay, one [c] even goes so far as to declare, that the Patriarch was deemed worthy of a heavenly vision, only because he lay his head upon the hard pillow of a stone, and what he did from necessity, advises us to do by choice. One [d] has fallen into the most idle and absurd spirit of allegorizing the plainest literal narratives, facts, and precepts; another [e], with equal absurdity, adheres so closely to the letter, that he tells us the devil invented buskins to give God the lie, because it is said, that a man cannot add one cubit to his stature. In short, my friend, these lights of the church were, in general, the most miserable fanatics, ignorant, puerile, and persecuting. No wonder, therefore, if those who consider them as guides, should tread in their steps. No won-

[a] See Justyn Martyr's ridiculous apologies for the cross.
[b] Athenagoras, Jerom, Cyprian, &c.
[c] Clement of Alexandria. [d] Origen. [e] Tertullian.

der if they should cherish ignorance, folly, fanaticism, and every ridiculous effect of blind and superstitious zeal.

Undoubtedly, my fair reasoner, these misguided severities are ruinous to the real interest of religion; and its professors, as you observe, have certainly hurt those interests by pursuing them too closely.

Slavish and broken spirits may thus, indeed, be imposed upon; but where is that free-will-offering, that rational and liberal worship, which, founded in an intelligent faith and gratitude, does real honour to the Deity? Such a worship can never be paid till the mind, rescued from the tyranny of an imposed belief, acquires the privilege of thinking and concluding for itself.

It would, therefore, be for the real interest of religion (if that interest may be allowed to consist in the promotion of a rational worship and an intelligent faith) that the mind should be set at large; and father M—— would by no means lose his account in it with regard to

your piety, though he should, as you say, give you a little respite, and suffer you to diversify your reading and your studies: for, what you observe is certainly just; and you would not only return to the attentions of religion with greater alacrity; but, by enlarging your moral and natural knowledge, you would acquire new and nobler principles of devotion, from beholding the wisdom and benevolence of your Creator displayed throughout the moral and the natural world.

But whether or not you can obtain this indulgence from your confessor, you will by all means secure this letter from his inquisitorial eye; otherwise, the fate not only of the letter itself, but of the writer, may be somewhat dubious.

I smiled at your wish, that I were appointed your confessor in the room of father M——. If I thought you sincere in that wish, I should have very little inclination to be satisfied; for, believe me, I had rather stand in any other relation to you. In one respect,

however, I should be gratified by this appointment. I should learn the state of your heart; and be assured I would govern it with absolute sway; that would be a circumstance worthy my ambition. Adieu! my amiable friend, and remember that, if ever I am honoured with the above-mentioned appointment, I will make it my question, whether you were sincere when you expressed that wish.

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER IX.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

I HAVE a thousand things to say; but where shall I begin, where end? My heart dies within me, when I think of some passages in your last; what dreadful spirits of misfortune have you conjured up! Lay them; for heaven's sake lay them again, if you have any regard for my peace and happiness. Shall I tell you that the enjoyment of your friendship is very essential to both? Why should I not tell you so? Surely silence on such a subject would be a kind of disingenuity!

This free and candid acknowledgment is the only return I am able to make for all that industry of kindness I have experienced from Theodosius. Poor and inadequate is the reward, but what can I do more? Is it in my power to return those rich lessons in kind by which I have been so much delighted, I hope, profited? Exalted moralist! amia-

ble and excellent philosopher! what a loss would Constantia suffer, if deprived of your friendship! To you she owes every valuable sentiment, and almost all the little knowledge she can boast; whatever, in your kindness, you are pleased to distinguish with praise, all, all is yours:

—— Onde s' alcun bel frutto
Naſce di me; da voi vien prima il seme.
Jo per me son quasi un terreno asciutto,
Colta da voi; e'l pregio è vostro in tutto.

How infinitely am I obliged to you for communicating so minutely your conversation with the excellent Fenelon! every word of that prelate deserves to be written in letters of gold. What sublime philosophy! What enlarged morality! What striking lineaments of human nature, and human manners!

But I am most charmed with the venerable man, when he explains and enforces his precept of "living agreeably to nature." I felt the truth of his observations without the aid of experience. And shall I appear vain,

when I tell you, that I have always retained certain sentiments that were of a colour with those of your noble friend? I have always thought that not only the moral, but the religious happiness of human life, was best cultivated by that simplicity of manners and desires which would always attend the love and pursuit of nature. Admire with me the following passage, which describes the happiness of the man who leads such a life:

E'l dubbio, e'l forse, e'l come, e'l perché, rio
Nol posson far, che non istà fra loro;
E col vero e col semplice iddio lega,
E'l ciel propizio alle sue voglie piega.

I think the sentiment, in the third-quoted verse, of uniting the idea of a God with Truth and Simplicity, remarkably beautiful.

You see I have already profited by the academician's letter, and have not neglected the amusements of poetry and the Belles Lettres. I am willing to ascribe to this elegant course of reading still greater advantages than he has allowed it, and am of opinion, that the

best philosophy and morality is to be found in the works of the poets; for with regard to philosophy, I would gladly be of opinion with the English poet, where he says,

> How charming is divine philosophy!
> Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute!

I would willingly persuade myself that the best poets are capable of instructing us in every part of useful knowledge; for I find a charm in their works superior to the pleasure any other mode of writing affords me.

Whether it is the power of harmony, or imagination, that thus leads me captive, I am at a loss to know; whether it is the elegance of thought, the tenderness, or the gentility peculiar to poetry, that delights me most, I am unable to determine; but all together give me the most exquisite, the most refined entertainment. I wonder not that honours, next to divine, have always been paid to poets; and that those heaven-favoured ge-

niuses have ever been esteemed superior to the rest of mankind. For my own part, if I should bring an offering to the shrine of any human Being, it should be to that of a poet.

Adieu!

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER X.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

THE approbation of Constantia is more than the reward of worlds, and her favour more valuable. The utmost of my ambition has ever been to serve and oblige her; but why will she ascribe to those services, to those poor endeavours to please, more merit than they can possibly have a claim to? Yet it is no wonder if Constantia, who possesses every virtue in the highest degree, should carry her gratitude to excess.

I will not anticipate those evils which my fears, possibly too industrious, have so often brought before me; but, while this delightful correspondence lasts, I will sit down, with security, to enjoy the sweets of it.

What spirit and sensibility! what elegance of thought, in your last charming letter! You have even improved upon the archbishop's precept of living agreeably to na-

ture; and, in concert with the Italian poet, from whom you have quoted that passage, so justly admired, you have thrown a new light upon the subject.

Nothing could be more nobly conceived than the sentiment of uniting the idea of a God with Truth and Simplicity. To deify and adore those amiable virtues, is certainly a very pardonable species of idolatry, if, indeed, it can be called idolatry; for we, certainly, worship the Supreme Perfection, while we worship his attributes, as it is only in those we can form any idea of him.

And yet it was from this source that idolatry, with all its troublesome and pernicious consequences, was derived of old. When the attributes of the universal Being were personified and exhibited by figures, the multitude, never capable of abstracted thinking, numbered so many gods.

The sentiment of your poet has, nevertheless, great metaphorical propriety; when divine honours are paid to Truth and Simpli-

city, much, certainly, is done for the service of virtue.

As you are professedly an admirer of simple nature, I will venture to send you a poem, which, on that account, I hope will be recommended by the subject. At least, I am sure, it has nothing else to recommend it; and let that declaration convince you, that I have not the ambition to aspire to the name and dignity of a poet, or to hope that you will bring an offering to my shrine.

WRITTEN IN A COTTAGE-GARDEN,

AT A VILLAGE IN LORRAIN;

AND OCCASIONED BY A TRADITION CONCERNING A TREE OF ROSEMARY.

ARBUSTUM LOQUITUR.

I.

O thou whom love and fancy lead
To wander near this woodland hill,
If ever music smooth'd thy quill,
Or pity wak'd thy gentle reed,
Repose beneath my humble tree,
If thou lov'st Simplicity.

II.

Stranger, if thy lot has laid
In toilsome scenes of busy life,
Full sorely may'st thou rue the strife
Of weary passions ill repaid.
In a garden live, like me,
If thou lov'st Simplicity.

III.

Flow'rs have sprung for many a year
O'er the village maiden's grave
That, one memorial-sprig to save,
Bore it from a sister's bier,
And, homeward walking, wept o'er me
The true tears of Simplicity:

IV.

And soon, her cottage-window near,
With care my slender stem she plac'd;
And fondly thus her grief embrac'd,
And cherish'd sad remembrance dear:
For love sincere, and friendship free,
Are children of Simplicity.

V.

When past was many a painful day,
Slow-pacing o'er the village green,
In white were all its maidens seen,
And bore my guardian friend away.

Ah death! what sacrifice to thee,
The ruins of Simplicity!

VI.

One generous swain her heart approv'd,
A youth whose fond and faithful breast
With many an artless sigh confess'd,
In nature's language, that he lov'd.
But, stranger, 'tis no tale for thee,
Unless thou lov'st Simplicity.

VII.

He died; and soon her lip was cold,
And soon her rosy cheek was pale:
The village wept to hear the tale,
When for both the slow bell toll'd—
Beneath yon flowery turf they lie,
The lovers of Simplicity.

VIII.

Yet one boon have I to crave;
Stranger, if thy pity bleed,
Wilt thou do one tender deed,
And strew my pale flowers o'er their grave?
So lightly lie the turf on thee,
Because thou lov'st Simplicity!

There is such a pleasure in the indulgence of tender melancholy and pity, that lest I

should deprive you of it, I will not add one word more than

THEODOSIUS.

*** The flowery branch of rosemary that accompanies this was gathered from the tree whose genius spoke the above verses.

LETTER XI.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

You must be sensible that you could not oblige me more than by favouring me with any of your poetical productions. Your village-maid is a pathetic picture of rural simplicity; as such I shall preserve it, together with the flowery branch of rosemary that accompanied it, for the sake of the author.

Your last favour reminds me of another, which you some time ago promised, but have now, perhaps, forgot. You praised the Latin verses of the celebrated English poet we have so often admired, and called him the best writer in that language since the age of Constantine. When I complained that I was unable to read him in that language, you kindly promised me a translation of one of his finest Latin poems, which, I think, you called a Pastoral Elegy on the death of one of his friends, whom he expected to have

embraced on his return from abroad, but found that he had taken his journey to that distant country,

—— from whose bourn
No traveller returns ———

Such a subject is capable of great tenderness; and, at the hands of Milton, it could not fail of finding it. Let me have one more instance of your kindness, in the execution of your promise.

Adieu!

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER XII.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

I HAVE made haste to oblige you; therefore you must be as ready to forgive, as I have been to obey.

THE PASTORAL PART OF

MILTON'S EPITAPHIUM DAMONIS.

O for the soft lays of Himeria's maids!
The strains that died in Arethusa's shades;
Tun'd to wild sorrow on her mournful shore,
When Daphnis, Hylas, Bion, breath'd no more!
Thame's vocal wave shall every note prolong,
And all his villas learn the Doric song.

How Thyrsis mourn'd his long-lov'd Damon dead;
What sighs he utter'd, and what tears he shed;
Ye dim retreats, ye wandering fountains know;
Ye desart-wilds bore witness to his woe:
Where oft in grief he pass'd the tedious day,
Or lonely languish'd the dull night away.

Twice had the fields their blooming honours bore;
And Autumn twice resign'd his golden store,

Unconscious of his loss, while Thyrsis staid
To woo the sweet muse in the Tuscan shade.
Crown'd with her favour, when he sought again
His flock forsaken, and his native plain;
When to his old elm's wonted shade return'd,
Then, then he miss'd his parted friend, and mourn'd.
And go, he cry'd, my tender lambs, adieu!
Your wretched master has no time for you.

Yet are there powers divine in earth or sky?
Gods can they be who destin'd thee to die?
And shalt thou mix with shades of vulgar name?
Lost thy fair honours, and forgot thy fame?
Not he, the god whose golden wand restrains
The pale-ey'd people of the gloomy plains,
Of Damon's fate shall thus regardless be,
Or suffer vulgar shades to herd with thee.
Then go, he cry'd, &c.

Yet while one strain my trembling tongue may try,
Not unlamented, shepherd, shalt thou die.
Long in these fields thy fame shall flourish fair,
And Daphnis only greater honours share;
To Daphnis only purer vows be paid,
While Pan, or Pales, loves the village-shade.
If truth or science may survive the grave,
Or, what is more, a poet's friendship save.
Then go, &c.

These, these are thine; for me what hopes remain,
Save of long sorrow, and of anguish vain?
For who, still faithful to my side, shall go,
Like thee, through regions clad with chilling snow?
Like thee, the rage of fiery summers bear,
When fades the wan flower in the burning air?
The lurking dangers of the chace essay,
Or sooth with song, and various tale, the day?
Then go, &c.

To whom shall I my hopes and fears impart?
Or trust the cares and follies of my heart?
Whose gentle counsels put those cares to flight?
Whose cheerful converse cheat the tedious night?
The social hearth when autumn's treasure store,
Chill blow the winds without, and through the bleak elm roar.
Then go, &c.

When the fierce suns of summer noons invade,
And Pan reposes in the green-wood shade,
The shepherds hide, the nymphs plunge down the deep,
And waves the hedge-row o'er the plowman's sleep.
Ah! who shall charm with such address refin'd,
Such attic wit, and elegance of mind?
Then go, &c.

Alas! now lonely round my fields I stray;
And lonely seek the pasture's wonted way.

Or in some dim vale's mournful shade repose;
There pensive wait the weary day's slow close,
While showers descend, the gloomy tempest raves,
And o'er my head the straggling twilight waves.
Then go, &c.

Where once fair harvest cloth'd my cultur'd plain,
Now weeds obscene and vexing brambles reign;
The groves of myrtle, and the clustering vine,
Delight no more; for joy no more is mine.
My flocks no longer find a master's care,
E'en piteous as they gaze with looks of dumb despair.
Then go, &c.

Thy hazel, Tyt'rus, has no charms for me;
Nor yet thy wild ash, lov'd Alphesibee.
No more shall Fancy weave her rural dream
By Ægon's willow, or Amynta's stream;
The trembling leaves, the fountain's cool serene,
The murmuring zephyr, and the mossy green—
These smile unseen, and those unheeded play;
I cut my shrubs, and careless walk'd away.
Then go, &c.

Mopsus, who knows what fates the stars dispense,
And solves the grove's wild warblings into sense—
This Mopsus mark'd—What thus thy spleen can move?
Some baleful planet, or some hopeless love?

The star of Saturn oft annoys the swain,
And in the dull, cold breast long holds his leaden
reign.
Then go, &c.

The nymphs too, piteous of their shepherd's woe,
Came the sad cause solicitous to know.
Is this the port of jocund youth, they cry—
That look disgusted, and that down-cast eye?
Gay smiles and love on that soft season wait;
He's [f] twice a wretch whom beauty wounds too
late.
Then go, &c.

One gentle tear the British Chloris gave,
Chloris, the grace of Maldon's purple wave:
In vain—my grief no soothing words disarm,
Nor future hopes nor present good can charm.
Then go, &c.

The happier flocks one social spirit moves—
The same their sports, their pastures, and their loves:

[f] Milton seems to have borrowed this sentiment from Guarini:

Che se t' assale a la canuta etate
Amoroso talento,
Havrai doppio tormento,
E di quel, che potendo non volesti,
E di quel, che volendo no potrai.

Their hearts to no peculiar object tend,
None knows a favourite, or selects a friend.
So herd the various natives of the main,
And Proteus drives in crowds his scaly train.
The feather'd tribes too find an easier fate;
The meanest sparrow still enjoys his mate;
And when by chance, or wearing age, she dies,
The transient loss a second choice supplies.

Man, hapless man, for ever doom'd to know
The dire vexations that from discord flow,
In all the countless numbers of his kind,
Can scarcely meet with one congenial mind.
If haply found, death wings the fatal dart,
The tender union breaks, and breaks his heart.
Then go, &c.

Ah me! what error tempted me to go
O'er foreign mountains and through Alpine snow?
Too great the price to mark in Tiber's gloom
The mournful image of departed Rome!
Nay, yet immortal, could she boast again
The glories of her universal reign,
And all that Maro left his fields to see,
Too great the purchase to abandon thee!
To leave thee in a land no longer seen!
Bid mountains rise, and oceans roll between!
Ah! not embrace thee! not to see thee die!
Meet thy last looks, or close thy languid eye!

Not one fond farewell with thy shade to send,
Nor bid thee think of thy surviving friend!
Then go, &c.

Ye Tuscan shepherds, pardon me this tear!
Dear to the muse, to me for ever dear!
The youth I mourn a Tuscan title bore.
See [g] Lydian Lucca for her son deplore!

O days of ecstasy! when rapt I lay
Where Arno wanders down his flowery way,
Pluck'd the pale violet, press'd the velvet mead,
Or bade the myrtle's balmy fragrance bleed!
Delighted, heard amid the rural throng
Menalcas strive with Lycidas in song.

Oft would my voice the mimic strain essay,
Nor haply all unheeded was my lay:
For, shepherds, yet I boast your generous meed,
The osier basket, and compacted reed.
Francino crown'd me with a poet's fame,
And Dati [h] taught his beechen groves my name.

[g] The Tuscans were a branch of the Pelasgi that migrated into Europe not many ages after the dispersion. Some of them marched by land as far as Lydia, and from thence detached a colony under the conduct of Tyrsenus to Italy.

[h] When Milton was in Italy, Carlo Dati was professor of Philosophy at Florence: a liberal friend to men of genius and learning, as well foreigners as his own countrymen. He wrote a panegyric and some poems on Lewis XIV. besides other tracts.

Milton, when he was in Italy, had the peculiar good fortune to find an age of geniuses, and to be distinguished by their favour in a very extraordinary manner. That polish which the young mind receives from the elegant simplicity of the classics he enjoyed in the greatest perfection. The considerable fund of that kind of knowledge which he took with him into Italy, he had the happiest means of improving and perfecting in those inspiring scenes where the finest writers of Latium first drew their breath. Those scenes afforded the best comment on the works of the Roman classics, and Milton shewed in all his Latin poems that he tasted their beauties in the most refined degree.

The friend he bewails in the charming poem, of which I have made these humble efforts to shew you the beauties, was the companion of his early years; and it is no wonder that he laments him with such pathetic tenderness: for friendships of that kind, which are nursed under the sunshine of young en-

thusiasm, are always the most vigorous. Are they not, my Constantia? I feel they are; for I am, &c.

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER XIII.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

I FLEW with your letter to our favourite alcove; and there with what pleasure, with what avidity, I perused it, Theodosius need not be told.

I verily believe that I am better pleased to be entertained than to be instructed; for I scarce ever received so much pleasure from a letter of yours as your last afforded me; yet what can be the reason? It is not, certainly, that I am jealous of your instructive letters as giving you a superiority; I cannot charge myself with so much pride. Nay, were I not sensible of that superiority, I must be stupid indeed: thus, however, I flatter myself on my penetration in being able to distinguish it, and on my modesty in being satisfied with it; and thus, like many other good people, I am vain of being free from vanity.

But all the instructions of my amiable philosopher have been seasoned with so much politeness, or conveyed in such an indirect manner, that while I had all the opportunity of profiting by them, I could hardly ever discern that they were intended for my use. If then your last letter pleased me more than any other, it is because I am idle, and voluptuous, and take more pleasure in poetry than in philosophy.

Yet the genius of Milton had such a moral turn, that he seldom wrote poetry without writing philosophy; and even the pastoral you have so obligingly translated, is not, I find, without something of it. How beautifully does he bewail the lost advantages of friendship!

To whom shall I my hopes and fears impart,
Or trust the cares and follies of my heart?

And, alas! how truly does he lament that man,

In all the countless numbers of his kind,
Can scarcely meet with one congenial mind!

Young as I am, I have felt the force of this truth, and have made many melancholy reflections upon it, after the painful, ridiculous, trifling, and impertinent visits I have been obliged to pay and receive from the sillier part of my sex. Horrid tyranny of fashion that imposes this upon us! What right can an equality, or a superiority of fortune, give one lady to rob another of her time, sense, and patience? I say her sense; for the conversation of fools leaves a tincture of folly upon us. What title has dress or figure to lay a tax upon us for admiration? Do not they who expect this insult our understanding? and are not those who pay it the slaves of folly? O that the shackles of custom were once broken, and that we might choose our society out of either sex without censure or inconvenience!

Just before I received your letter, I was delivered from the most despicable and impertinent set of visitors that ever disgraced the name of good company. To me such visits are always visitations. To the above-

mentioned deliverance, you may, if you please, impute some degree of that extraordinary pleasure I ascribed to the perusal of your letter. This I say, lest I should contribute to make you, what you have so often made me, vain; and thus, at least, you must acknowledge that I outdo you in generosity.

I am not displeased with your observation, that young friendships are the most tender; no doubt they are; for the friendships, like all other pursuits and attachments of youth, have novelty to recommend them, passions to enliven, and enthusiasm to cherish them. But ah! my friend! (for once I will say, my Theodosius!) when novelty is no more; when the passions subside, and enthusiasm vanishes like a dream; will not the friendships, will not the attachments, that these principles produced, vanish with them? I will not fear it, though it should be true

——— non é prudenza
Ma follia de mortali
L' arte crudel di presagirsi i mali.

One thing, however, I will freely acknowledge, or rather boast of, that my friendship for Theodosius is, exclusively, founded on esteem. For this reason, I flatter myself that it will last in all its present cordiality. Why should it not? It has nothing to lose when the charm of novelty is lost. Its existence, by no means, depends upon the passions; it has, therefore, nothing to apprehend when they languish or decline. It derives not its support from enthusiasm, and, consequently, cannot suffer when enthusiasm dies away.

While thus I comfort, I hope I do not deceive myself. But, should even that be the case, let your sagacity for once give way to your compassion, and do not undeceive me. This is, perhaps, the only instance in which I could be satisfied with myself for declining the report of truth.

Observe, however, that I expect you will, with the utmost candour and ingenuity, resolve some parts of my doubts, and tell me

freely, whether those young friendships which are heightened by novelty, by the passions, and enthusiasm, will not inevitably perish with those sources that support them.

You see I have been at pains to induce you to declare your sentiments on this subject; since I have removed the principal objection, that might have occurred to you, by declaring that my friendship for you cannot be affected by the argument.

Adieu!

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER XIV.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

THOUGH there is nothing in which Constantia has not a right to command her friend, and though, in every thing, it is his pride and pleasure to obey her; yet he will own that he goes unwillingly about the task she has appointed him.

Ah! my dear, my amiable moralist! it is frequently the happiness of man to shut his eyes against the infirmities of his nature! In those circumstances, where the knowledge of his weakness cannot save him from some real evil, that knowledge is of less value than ignorance.

The benevolent purposes of Providence have concealed the future from us, that we may not be interrupted in the enjoyment of the present; and it is, in many cases, necessary to our happiness, that we should imitate this economy of the Supreme Wisdom, and

embrace those innocent pleasures which the several periods of life may afford us, without inquiring too officiously into their causes or events, and without being too solicitous about their duration.

Many, possibly, of our pleasures, many, I am sure, of our amusements, spring from such sources as, upon inquiry, would be found to do little honour to a creature distinguished by reason. Their tendency, at the same time, is frequently as insignificant as their cause, and both are unworthy of a serious inquiry.

There are, indeed, enjoyments of a higher nature, that may better deserve our attention; and yet, to inquire into the probability of their duration, might contribute very little to our happiness.

Such, in particular, are the connexions of friendship. These are the property of man, and must, therefore, be frail, changeable, and uncertain, like himself. It must, consequently, be for his ease to sit down unapprehensive to

enjoy them, without meditating on all the possible variety of evils to which they must be exposed, from a change of sentiments and inclinations, and from the several contingencies of chance and time.

It is into the fate of young friendships, my Constantia, that you would lead my inquiries. These, indeed, are not the least unworthy of our attention; for youth is the season both of friendship and of virtue. If to a disposition naturally not unsociable, we have added the advantages of a liberal education, we come into the business and society of life, in general, better and happier creatures than we are when we leave it.

We step into the world with liberal sentiments and benevolent affections, but the experimental knowledge of men contracts the former and starves the latter: insomuch that he must be possessed of a disposition more than ordinarily humane, who does not, in some degree, become a misanthropist before he dies. I may go further, and add, that he

must have uncommon virtue and greatness of mind, who, with unblemished manners, and uncontracted sentiments, can sail with such a corrupted crew down the current of life.

Man is, in spite of all his reason, an imitative creature, and what he has been long accustomed to observe in others, he will, with difficulty, forbear to admit in himself. By habit we may bring ourselves to behold deformity without disgust, and by being long conversant in scenes of enmity and insincerity, the love of truth and humankind will insensibly decay.

As youth, therefore, is the season of sincerity and benevolence, it must, of consequence, be the most promising season of friendship; for those virtues are its best and surest foundation.

We love a benevolent man for our own sakes, and a sincere man for the sake of his sincerity. Esteem for ever attends the union of these; that esteem which my Constantia

has done me the honour to acknowledge, as the source of her friendship!

Thus, my fair casuist, you see we have a sufficient foundation whereon to erect an early friendship, exclusive of novelty, the passions, and enthusiasm; and we may justly conclude, therefore, that such a friendship may exist, though all such auxiliaries should vanish or decay.

Yet while these last, they undoubtedly yield us a more high-set pleasure, as well in friendship, as in every other enjoyment.

Nevertheless I know not whether much ought to be ascribed to novelty, which, in the cup of friendship, is, certainly, the very worst ingredient. Possibly it may, for a while, give a poignancy to the taste, but the mellowing power of time produces a much better and more agreeable flavour.

The prevalence and activity of the passions keep up that lively zest, and ardour of affection, which add to the readiness of confidence, and are productive of a thousand agreeable sensations.

Enthusiasm has an effect on friendship proportionable to its influence on love. It heightens it with the glowing sentiments of imagination, and embellishes its real advantages with the visionary charms of fancy and intellectual refinement!

Yet when these shall depart with departing youth; while sincerity and benevolence remain, friendship shall remain with them. A reflection which affords me the highest consolation! as I am convinced that, in consequence of those principles, Constantia cannot cease to be the friend of

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER XV.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

WHAT a letter! my friend. If you have drawn a true picture of human nature, and if the knowledge of the world be really attended with the consequences you mention, who would not live in ignorance? Ah! Theodosius! what fears! what uneasiness has your letter awakened! Better, indeed, my philosopher, had you suffered me to continue in ignorance! Better, and kinder, had you permitted me to enjoy my visionary dream of the duration and improvement of human virtue! Ah! too penetrating friend! too ingenious in the discovery of that weakness it would have been happier to hide! You were sensible of this truth, and why would you gratify my impertinent curiosity, only to make me miserable? To give me melancholy and mortifying ideas of that life in which my lot has fallen!

Yet, surely, Theodosius, the sweet affections of benevolence will not wear away with youth. If the commerce of the world doth not corrupt the heart, surely it will still have room for so delightful a guest. I declare, that, without one womanish fear, I would part with my being, rather than hold it on any other terms.

But what superfluous apprehensions do I entertain? This dreadful shipwreck can only happen on the tempestuous ocean of the world; my bark, I am determined, shall not be exposed to such ruin. Safely shall it steer into some quiet harbour, and rest secure from storms and tempests.

Seriously and plainly, my friend, you have given me such ideas of mixing with the world, and of the inconveniencies which attend it, that I, who can boast no superior fortitude, conclude, it must be my happiness to live in solitary obscurity. There I can embrace your good prelate's precept, and "live agreeably to nature." There I shall be free from the im-

pertinence of folly, and the censoriousness of envy. My precious hours will not be sacrificed to triflers; I shall employ them in studies worthy of a rational creature.

O Theodosius! for those delightful moments that shall glide away on the halcyon-wings of peace and tranquillity: for those dear uninterrupted days of letters and leisure, when the mind may riot in intellectual festivity; and, free from every low, every vulgar and debasing care, may acquire that dignity and knowledge which shall properly recommend it to some higher state of existence!

What luxury is in the thought! even now I anticipate the happiness I describe. Even now, in imagination, I enjoy those easy pleasures, that independence of mind and body, which solitude and liberty must afford. I look back on Theodosius bustling in the world, pity him, pray for him, and tremble for his virtue.

Adieu! Adieu!

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER XVI.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

"ENJOY thy dream, dear and amiable enthusiast! Enjoy thy visionary scene! To rouse thee from those delightful reveries, to break those fancy-favoured slumbers, would be cruel, if not impious." Such, and so expressed were my sentiments, on perusing your last dear letter. But tenderness must give place to truth; at least in a circumstance so important as that of laying down a plan of life.

There is scarce any thing in which the mind is so apt to mistake its true interest, as in projects of future happiness. It is impossible to know how we shall bear those stations, or circumstances, which we have only contemplated at an unaffecting distance; and yet, with an assurance that does more honour to our courage than our discretion, we venture to conclude, that those appointments, or schemes of life to which we are perfectly

strangers, would infallibly complete our felicity.

In the mean time, we never consider that new stations, and appointments to which we have not been accustomed, must necessarily take us out of our usual train of sentiments, actions, and attentions. This, however, will make us uneasy; for change is always an evil, and we never feel it more sensibly than in the manner and economy of life.

With respect to your scheme of living secluded from the world, I should have condemned it with the short censure of a smile, had I not paid so much deference to your reason and judgment as to conclude, that those ought to be appealed to on every argument that might relate to your sentiments and resolutions.

Will my beautiful friend forgive me, then, if I suppose that Judgment to have been bribed by Enthusiasm, when she concluded that, by living alone, she should "live agreeably to nature?"

I am sensible, Madam, that by this you meant no more, than that such a mode of life would exempt you from those external temptations, those idle luxuries and follies, which are apt to make us deviate from the paths of truth and simplicity. But did you consider, that to live alone is to live contrary to nature? A state of solitude is not the natural state of man. The arguments I should make use of to prove this are old and obvious. That I may be less unentertaining, therefore, while I mean to set before you the inconveniencies attending your scheme of life, I will give you a short account of a lady of my own family, who formed the same resolutions, and put them in practice.

Thus her story is related in a manuscript still preserved among the family papers.

"Eudocia, an only daughter, was bred up under the auspices of Altheria, a lady equally distinguished by her piety as a christian, and her affection as a parent. The temper and genius of the daughter were na-

turally warm and susceptible: the offices and duties of religion had habitually inspired her with such a zealous and fervent devotion, that she seemed to have no happiness that did not flow from those exercises and attentions which religion required.

Her knowledge of books was little, of human nature less. She had, notwithstanding, conceived an infinite contempt for that world to which she was utterly a stranger, and concluded, that to enter into the interests and engagements of society would be a voluntary sacrifice to vice and folly.

Eudocia was in natural good sense, beauty, and a sweetness of disposition, equalled by few women of her time. These qualities engaged the affections of Alphenor, a gentleman whose genius and penetration gave him a kind of intuitive knowledge of the human heart.

He concluded, that every attempt to introduce Eudocia to the world, or to establish the social life in her good opinion, would be vain. He knew that it would be fruitless to

argue with her on the pleasures she had never known, and the miseries she had never experienced. He, therefore, did not expatiate either on the advantages of society, or the inconveniencies of solitude; for such had been the condition of Eudocia's life, that, as yet, she was, in a great measure, a stranger to both.

Upon the death of her parents, which happened before she had attained her twenty-fifth year, her fortune and manner of life were at her own disposal. She now determined to put in execution a scheme which she had long meditated. It was to retire, but not into a convent. A spirit of liberty had always saved her from that sacrifice, however industriously solicited by the emissaries of the church, or encouraged by selfish relations.

She was possessed of an estate, situated in a very retired part of the province of Compeigne; and there it was that she had determined to live sequestered from the world, with no other society than an aged confessor,

and necessary domestics. Of the last she made a very few, and those females, sufficient.

At this crisis it might have been expected that Alphenor would have used his utmost address to dissuade her from her purpose. By no means. On the contrary, he encouraged her in her resolution, applauded the piety of her purpose, and expatiated on the happiness of solitary sanctity. He assumed not the least of the lover's character, but that of the religious friend.

By this means he gained one point, which he had used all his industry, all his art, to obtain. He had Eudocia's permission to pay her one visit at the end of three months after her retirement; a favour which was allowed to none beside, either of her friends or acquaintance, and which Alphenor himself, though through the medium of religion, had scarce address sufficient to obtain.

Eudocia retired. She approached the confines of her estate with raptures, and paid a

kind of idolatrous worship to the venerable groves that surrounded her habitation.

"Hail," she cried, "ye innocent and happy foresters! ye shall at once be the witnesses and the guardians of my repose. Enjoy your vegetable existence, secure from the cruelties and the ravages of man! I have fled from the evils of society to enjoy peace and innocence with you; my undesigning friends! my blameless companions! often shall I associate with you, and repose under the kind protection of your shade."

With the same kind of enthusiastic pleasure she walked through the several apartments of her house, consecrating each with a kind of petitionary ejaculation.

For the first week of her retirement she found sufficient employment in the economy of her family, and the distribution of their several offices to her domestics. The second she devoted wholly to religious exercises and the raptures of devotion.

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I have been interrupted, and you will not at present be troubled with any further account of my pious ancestor.

Adieu!

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER XVII.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

* * * *But* whatever is rapturous cannot last long: those exercises that lift the mind above its usual pitch, if too frequently, or too long indulged, will at length either totally destroy it, or deprive it of that sobriety which is necessary for the preservation of its due poise.

Nature seems, in kindness, to have guarded us against the inconveniences that might arise from hence, by shortening the influence of joy, by inclining us to variety, and by giving the property either of indifference or disgust, to every object that has been too long, or too assiduously, pursued, with whatever avidity it might have been embraced at first.

That little society to which Eudocia had hitherto been accustomed was a necessary relief from the assiduities of religious studies and exercises; and, far from being any prejudice, was, in reality, favourable to the in-

terests of religion. It is certain, however, that she was of a different opinion upon her first seclusion from the world; but many weeks had not passed, before she felt the inconveniences of her mistake, if she was unwilling to perceive the mistake itself.

The exercises of devotion, by being too frequently repeated, became languid and unaffecting: her mind, having been accustomed to communication, shrunk under the weight of its own sentiments; and every succeeding day approached less welcome, and more feared than the former.

What should she do? Should she return to that world she had forsaken and despised? But a sense of shame and pride rose in opposition to that thought, and strangled it in its birth.

In this dissatisfied and dejected state she recollected the appointment of Alphenor's visit; with joy she recollected it, and remembered, with a blush, the difficulties she had started against it.

"How," said she, "shall I conceal that pleasure which I cannot but feel at the sight of Alphenor? If I express my real sentiments, he will have reason to think his presence of some consequence to my happiness; and if I receive his visit with an indifference equal to that with which I received the proposal of it, I shall do violence to that candour and sincerity of heart which cannot bear even the shadow of dissimulation. In the former case I should appear a weak and unsteady creature to Alphenor. In the latter, I should become insupportable to myself."

While she was thus meditating in what manner she should receive her friend, the time appointed for his visit was at hand. But Alphenor did not appear—master of every key to the human heart, he knew that if, by delaying his visit to Eudocia, he gave it the appearance of uncertainty, that uncertainty would probably create an anxiety on her part, which might not be unfavourable to his design.

This had the desired effect: day after day passed away in the same solitary languor, and Eudocia concluded, that the many objections she had made to Alphenor's visit had determined him, at last, to think of it no more. This reflection made her miserable, and she now wished for nothing so ardently, as that the presence of her friend would prove those apprehensions vain.

At length he came. A tear fell from the eye of Eudocia when she received him; he observed it, and knew that he had now nothing more to do than to reconcile her to herself, and to enable her to acknowledge her mistake without shame or confusion.

Those wants that invention or eloquence could supply never distressed him long.

" I hope, Madam," said he, " that a life of solitude has been more comfortable to you than it has been to me." " How," cried Eudocia, " has Alphenor been a solitaire?"

" Such, Madam, I have been ever since I lost the happiness of Eudocia's conversa-

tion. It was always my ambition to imitate her. Shall she, said I, shall a woman have fortitude to forsake the world, and retire to solitude, to practise the sublime duties of religion; and shall I not profit by the example of that virtue I cannot but praise? But, alas! Madam! alas! Eudocia! shall I confess to you——"

"What would Alphenor confess? That either the miseries and the inconveniences of absolute solitude must be very great, or that I must have an uncommon and disgraceful weakness of mind; for the time I have thus devoted, I have not spent in happiness, but in languor and discontent."

Eudocia shed another tear.

"How kind," said Alphenor, "thus to pity the unhappiness of your friend!"

"I cannot," replied Eudocia, "accept of a compliment I do not deserve. The tear you observed had something selfish in it. Alphenor can have no weakness that is not the weakness of human nature; and, could it be

any satisfaction to him to know that his friend has been as miserable in a state of solitude as himself, his own ingenuous confession might countenance her in acknowledging it."

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For a woman of my Constantia's penetration, it would be needless to transcribe any more of the above narrative; and it will be sufficient to inform her, that from the union of Alphenor and Eudocia, in a distant descent, came

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER XVIII.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

Oh! Theodosius! my guide! my friend! my instructor! alas! no more!

The tear swims in my eye; my heart swells; and my hand trembles while I tell you, that you are—banished for ever from this place, and that I am forbidden to see you, or hear from you more.

What, what shall I do? nothing ever can repair this cruel loss; the loss of a wise, a learned, and a virtuous friend! What has the world of equal worth! Deprived, for ever deprived, of that presence which enlivened with invariable cheerfulness and sensibility; of that conversation which never failed to make the mind richer, the heart happier; and (O cruel extension of resentment!) of that precious, that instructive correspondence, which, as it afforded me the best means of cultivating and improving my mind, ought to have been

considered with gratitude by the very person who has forbidden it.

But of whom, or of what, do I presume to complain? Duty restrains the remonstrances of grief and the expostulations of sorrow. You are not now ignorant that the quarrel you dreaded has actually happened, with the bitterest recriminations.

Then, farewell, my best and most valuable friend! for ever to be remembered! for ever to be regretted! Accept of all I can return for your invariable, your industrious kindness! Most respected of men! most esteemed of friends! accept the gratitude of a tear, and think of

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER XIX.

TO THEODOSIUS.

[*From an unknown hand.*]

THE writer of this letter is not a stranger to the mutual regard of THEODOSIUS and CONSTANTIA. From sure authority he knows, that the hand of that lady is, by the appointment of her father, in which, it seems, she has acquiesced, within two days to be given to another. Theodosius will make what use he thinks proper of this information, and conclude that he receives it from

A FRIEND.

LETTER XX.[1]

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

THE thought of my Constantia, which has for some time been my only happiness, is now become a greater torment to me than I am able to bear. Must I then live to see you another's? Death is in the thought; and, indeed, life itself is now become a burthen to me. May you long be happy in the world, but forget that there was ever such a man in it as

THEODOSIUS.

[1] This letter, which, with some little variations, is recorded by the Spectator, No. 164, concludes the correspondence of Theodosius and Constantia, from their first acquaintance to the departure of Theodosius.

LETTERS

WHICH PASSED BETWEEN

THEODOSIUS AND CONSTANTIA

AFTER SHE HAD TAKEN THE VEIL.

LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

THE efforts which a mind in trouble makes to regain its lost peace, like the glances of the sun that struggle through opposing clouds, are delightful to all beholders. When my Constantia rose above that gloom of sorrow which her too apprehensive heart had thrown around her; when I saw her eye brighten, and her elegant but dejected features assume that beautiful form in which nature had moulded them, I should have felt the pleasure of a Christian, had I not once been Theodosius.

Amiable mourner! Let us now forget the name which you have so long remembered with anguish, and which you could not pronounce without trembling, when you affect-

ingly told Theodosius that you believed him to be no more. I wept, my Constantia, but my concern arose not from a sense of your guilt, but of your sufferings. Those tears, indeed, fell from the eyes of Theodosius, and in them the confessor had no part. The powers of memory and reflection were, in one moment, presented with every scene of distress and tenderness which our unhappy loves had produced. And when I considered myself as the unfortunate cause of your long, your unmerited sufferings, I felt, in one painful minute, what Constantia had endured for years. Perhaps, too, your unequalled fidelity and unaltered love, while they flattered my heart, brought it back a moment to the world. But my guardian Spirit whispered me that I had made a higher choice, and reminded me that the duties I owed you were those of a spiritual director, from whom you were to receive consolation and instruction. But, before I proceed to the further discharge of those duties, let me entreat you to forgive me—forgive me,

suffering innocence, for being the unhappy, though involuntary, instrument of your many miseries. Five uncheerful years! my Constantia! How has your gentle heart supported itself during that melancholy period? How has it sustained those cruel apprehensions which, in confession, shook your frame? The reflection of what you must have endured for me, as it then wrung my soul with anguish, yet clouds it with sorrow, and has power to disturb the serenity of a mind which, I trust, hath been visited by the peace of God.

But I should be still more disconsolate, were I not well assured that your present happiness will be in proportion to your former sufferings, and that the difficult ways through which you walked have at last conveyed you to the mansions of peace.

Such, Constantia, is the lot of human life. The road to happiness is seldom strewed with flowers, nor perhaps ought it to be so; as we should, in that case, be inclined to take our passage for our port, and, while we enjoyed

the manna, we might neglect the promised land.

I am, however, of a different opinion from most men with regard to moral and natural evils. They derive them from the hand of Providence, and charge the consequences of human passions, follies, and vices, upon the divine administration. I remember to have seen a liturgy for the visitation of the sick, wherein the minister was directed to inform the sick person that, whatever he suffered, it was "the visitation of God." Would this exhortation have been proper for a person who was labouring under diseases that were the natural and inevitable effects of intemperance? Can those pains which the sufferer has consciously and voluntarily brought upon himself be deemed the visitation of God? Would not this be "to charge God foolishly?" And, if this were admitted, with what propriety could we say of that divine Being, that "He does not willingly afflict his creatures?" With regard to this doctrine, my Constantia, it is of

consequence that you should be right informed, because " from mistaken apprehension of providence proceed almost all the errors of religious faith [a]." But most dangerous to ourselves, and most injurious to the Deity, are those opinions which magnify his despotism at the expence of his benevolence. Hearken not to such opinions, Constantia: God cannot be the minister of evil.

Our sufferings, natural and moral, are the consequence of that freedom of will which is the very essence of our moral powers, and without which we should be mere machines, incapable of all virtue. There are indeed some natural evils which to incur or avoid depends not upon ourselves, because they come not within the economy of reason. But of these we partake only in common with mankind; and as in the dispensation of some of these we can perceive that Providence had wise and gracious purposes, so we may fairly infer,

[a] See Letters on Religious Retirement, &c. where this thought is carried further.

that those whose final causes we cannot apprehend, have their origin in the same universal benevolence.

It is, I think, generally understood, as a doctrine founded upon revelation, that there are such things as divine inflictions even in this life. No doubt there may be such, and there may be seasons obvious to the eye of Providence, when it is good for us to be afflicted. We may be summoned by calamity from the pursuit of pleasure, and, though we cannot perceive the hand, the writing may be divine.

But I believe that this interposition of the supreme power is very rare. Nay, I will own to you, Constantia, that my faith in this doctrine is, at best, but diabolical; for while I believe, I tremble. Will God do evil that good may come? Is it necessary? Can Almighty Power be limited in the use of means?

I will moreover warn you of the evils that may be derived from this doctrine. It may prompt us to vain comparisons and uncha-

ritable constructions: when we behold the calamities of others, we may be inclined to trace the finger of God where it has not been; and when we tacitly refer to our own condition, we may impute our exemption from evil to that integrity whereof we ought not to boast.

Under the mosaical dispensation present inflictions were more visible because more necessary: for, what other restraint was there upon the moral actions of mankind? When the great sanctions of Christianity were set forth, those restraints became inconsiderable, and were totally absorbed in the interest of the new system. "Old things passed away; behold! All things became new."

"But we are too apt to mix our religion, and to incorporate the divinity of the Old Testament with that of the New." The moral law indeed still remains in force, because its tendency was everlasting; but when God saw fit to enter into a new covenant with man, the dispensations of his providence were al-

tered, and made agreeable to it. Thus, though under the old law it might be necessary for the divine power "to chasten whom he loved," yet that measure could be no longer expedient, when the hopes and fears of mankind were appealed to by the sanctions of immortality.

It is of great importance to you, Constantia, to form a right idea of your Creator, and to "know in whom you have believed." To assist you in this respect will be one of the first endeavours of Father

FRANCIS.

LETTER II.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

My sorrows for Theodosius are no more: he lives, and Constantia is happy. If you would not have me remember my sufferings, forget them yourself; for nothing now could make the reflection of them painful to me, but their affecting my reverend father.

Gracious Providence! And have I at length found a father? Has heaven granted what nature refused? She gave me indeed a father, but he forgot the name; or he remembered the name and the authority, but forgot the duties of the alliance. Do I err? Then instruct me, my holy guide, instruct me to revere the man who banished Theodosius, and imbittered, without cause, the moments of her whom he had brought into being. But I will revere him, for he was kind at last, and permitted me to retire to this asylum of peace. Whatever were his motives,

I will revere him; for have I not here found the only comfort I was capable of? Am I not sure that Theodosius lives? Without that conviction (I own my weakness) I should have been unhappy within these holy walls. The exercises of devotion I pursued with equal assiduity before I entered upon the conventual life; but my prayers were the heavy sacrifices of sorrow and contrition. I was alike a stranger to the serenity of peace, and to the alacrity of hope. It was not in the power of conscious penitence to set my heart at ease, whenever the painful thought presented itself, that my cowardly acquiescence in the will of a father had been death to the most valuable and most amiable of men. Pitying heaven has at length undeceived me, and at once restored to my eyes those dear lamented fugitives, Theodosius and Happiness; both changed indeed, but both improved by the change. The pleasure I enjoyed in the company of the elegant and lively Theodosius, was gay, sprightly, and animated, like himself: with him it de-

parted and returned; and my heart was alternately delighted and depressed. Very different is the satisfaction I now feel. It is serene and peaceful like father Francis. My mind is collected, and my spirits are reposed. No longer agitated with the anxieties and impatience of hopes that terminate here, my eye is fixed on that distant, invariable object of happiness, on which time or chance can have no influence.

Ye holy retreats! ye venerable ailes! do I owe this peace to you? No, not to you: for methinks I have seen in your regions the gloom of discontent. Is it not, my pious father, from a quiet conscience that I derive this repose? I should not, indeed, have felt it before I entered this convent, but I should not then have known that Theodosius was still in being.

Do not think, however, that I rejoice not in my situation. I do rejoice in it: but my joy arises, as I apprehend, from a disburdened mind. The sudden change from pain-

ful apprehension to the certainty of confirmed wishes, was attended with a transport, the effects of which I still feel. But will not these effects last? Surely they will. O my friend! what tears of joy have I shed over that first welcome letter which informed me that Theodosius was still alive.

But do I not forget that I am addressing myself to the venerable Francis? Pardon me! I had indeed forgot, till, on re-perusing that ever-dear letter, I beheld the holy name at the bottom. Yes; delightful letter! sweet messenger of peace! thou informest me that I must consider Theodosius still as dead. Ha! dead, didst thou say? Theodosius is still alive. Didst not thou say that too? Equivocating letter! Be gone into my bosom: but presume not there to say that Theodosius is dead.

Heavens! what rambling is this? Whither has my unguided pen betrayed me! Once more forgive me, my revered father!

I thank you for the comfort, as well as for the information, which your last letter af-

forded me. You have placed the eternal Providence in a light the most amiable, and new, at least to me. I had always, hitherto, looked upon that power as the inflictor of temporary evils, and considered both private and public calamities as his judgments. But you have now made me of a different opinion; and I entirely agree with you, that temporary rewards and punishments are superseded by the sanctions of the christian religion. Nevertheless I am still of opinion that God may occasionally interpose, by the infliction of evil, to save a wretch who is thoughtlessly or obstinately hasting to destruction; but, with you, I apprehend that such dispensations are very rare, and am, for the reasons you mention, almost afraid to believe them.

One thought, however, occurs to me on this occasion, which I shall take the liberty to mention, in consequence of the invitation you have given me to express my sentiments without reserve.

We are so entirely different in our powers

and passions, and the circumstances of sin and temptation are so extremely various, that though the Almighty might in general leave it to the sanctions of religion alone to influence the actions of men, yet possibly he might (so to term it) reserve a discretionary power, to bring proper objects by afflictions to their duty.

But though the Creator of the universe can in no sense be the author of evil, it cannot be doubted, I apprehend, that he may, and frequently does, bring good out of evil. Of this the story of Joseph is, in all its circumstances, a remarkable proof. I cannot suppose, neither would you have me believe, that God inspired the brethren of Joseph with envy, that they might sell him into Egypt, or that, when sold, the wife of Potiphar was influenced by a superior power to accuse him falsely; yet, what glorious advantages did the Almighty Providence bring out of both these events!

And has he not, for he regards the humblest of his creatures, has he not for me turn-

ed the path of sorrow towards the harbour of peace? I will believe it, lest I should prove ungrateful. Pray for me, and instruct me. Adieu!

CONSTANCE.

LETTER III.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

GOOD sense, Constantia, makes better comments than learning, and I find that to propose my opinions to you will be of advantage to myself.

But do you not err, my amiable friend, and is there not some acrimony in your language, when you speak of your natural father? It must not be. The duties of parents and children are indeed reciprocal: but the unnatural parent cannot acquit the child of its duty, any more than the undutiful child can acquit the parent of his natural obligations. Both these, however, are to be understood as secondary to the great duties we owe ourselves. A child ought no more to embrace misery than vice to oblige a parent, and a parent is under no obligation to forfeit his own happiness for the gratification of a child. But, under all circumstances, that respect which is

due to a parent still subsists; and when Constantia reflects on this, she cannot withhold that respect. Pity your father, Constantia; pray for your father. If the god of this world hath blinded his eyes, fervently pray for him in the words of Saint David, "O God, lighten his eyes, that he sleep not the sleep of death." He bears no uncommon marks of guilt or infamy. His foible is the love of money; a passion which, of all others, is the most difficult to guard against, because it increases by imperceptible degrees; and when it has once got entire possession of the heart, I believe that there is no remedy for it. Many liberal men have become covetous, but I never yet knew one covetous man who became liberal; so easy is it in every instance to deviate from virtue to vice, and so hard in that particular case to rise from vice to virtue. Let us then consider your father as an object of compassion, and by no means forget to offer up our prayers for him. Who knows whether Heaven may not listen to the voice of

supplicating innocence, and be overcome by the intreaties of filial piety? Would it not throw a new glory around the brows of Constantia, should her father be restored to virtue by her prayers?

You are in the right, Constantia, to ascribe your present happiness to peace of conscience; for that is the foundation of all moral and religious comfort. Without that the hallowed walls of a cloister would be hung with horrors, and the gloomy retreats of a convent would administer melancholy to the mind. It is that alone which gives serenity to our devotion, and enables us properly to communicate with God. It is that which the apostle of the Gentiles, in his second letter to the converts of Corinth and other parts of Achaia, offered to their consideration, to take off that concern and sorrow which they must have felt for the persecutions which he and the rest of his fellow-labourers had undergone in their travels through Asia. The confidence of the conscious mind, he informs them, in every

painful, every trying calamity, had still supported them. Nay, continues he, we can even rejoice in our distresses, and "our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience."

Perhaps there is no passage in the sacred writings which more beautifully and more emphatically expresses this moral sense or conscience, than that of the proverbialist: "The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts." Heaven, says the wise man, has placed its candle within us, whose rays can pierce the most secret recesses. No thought so complicated but it can trace it to its origin; no idea so abstracted which its light cannot discover. If we should say that the darkness should cover us, that the clouds of night should veil us from its ray; behold "the darkness is not darkness with it, the day and the night with it are both the same." This attends us through every circumstance of life; it accompanies thought through all the variety of its excursions, and marks the source and the progress of action.

Conscience sits as judge in the mind, and approves or condemns our designs and actions, as it sees them just or unjust, agreeable or contrary to the laws of God and nature. If we have done well, it teaches us to rejoice in the reflection; and if evil, it fails not to punish us with a painful sense of it. From hence arises the continual happiness of the good man, and the never-ending disquiet of the guilty. Hence virtue is said to be its own reward, from the pleasures of reflection; and hence it is that "there is no peace to the wicked." Whatever artifice they use to silence conscience, or escape its reproaches, though sometimes these may be so far successful as to encourage them to commit greater crimes, yet the judge will again return to the charge, and they will find that he has slept only to wake with double vigour and fury. Some indeed there are who seem to have quite banished this inhabitant from their breasts, and to have extinguished the divine luminary; who go on in a continual course of wicked-

ness, and have " no fear of God before their eyes." But if we more strictly attend to the lives and actions of these men, we shall find that the noise and triumph they make in their guilt, proceeds not so much from the satisfaction it affords them, as from an endeavour, however unsuccessful, to stifle the dictates of the friend in their breasts; and could we pursue them into the privacy of retirement, I will venture to say that we should find them either affectedly indolent, or painfully discontent. Hence appears the superiority of conscience. Hence it appears that there are no arts sufficient to silence it entirely, and that it may therefore be supposed to come from that Being whose determinations must have their effect, and whose power is not to be resisted.'

If we should inquire into the design of Providence in thus furnishing us with this silent inspector, we should find that in this case, as well as in all others, our God has acted from the dictates of infinite goodness. Had we been without this ever-active censor, what

would have been the consequence? Too apt we are even now to slight the admonitions of it, and should we not still more easily have fallen a prey to temptation, had there been no internal monitor to inform us that "this should not be done?" Would not vice have found many more votaries, when no meeting remonstrance checked it, and no painful reflection followed? It is evident then that conscience was stationed in the human mind by the "giver of all good gifts;" and that for the aid of virtue, and for the support of reason, "it came down from the Father of lights." Is not this, Constantia, our guardian angel, who warns us against the most dangerous of all enemies, the enemies of our salvation? By this friendly spy we are informed of, and even foresee, their attacks; and happy it is for us that we are thus assisted. The insinuations of Vice, after all, are too often successful, and her arts prevail against the force of conviction. Nor, indeed, should we consider all the stratagems she makes use of, would there

be any room to wonder at her success. Does she not assume the characters of pleasure, knowledge, virtue, nay, and of religion too: her great patron being conscious that he shall be most successful in his works of darkness when he assumes the appearance of an angel of light? Does not the most profligate licentiousness call itself pleasure? Does not molesighted infidelity claim the titles of knowledge and philosophy? Has not religion been asserted by blood-thirsty zeal? And has not fanatic Hypocrisy likewise assumed her banner, and lift up her voice in the streets? O conscience! thou sacred guardian of rational virtue and religious truth, let loose thy vengeance upon these monsters, these pests of society, and emissaries of vice!

Do not you perceive, my Constantia, in this dispensation of providence, the perfection of wisdom and goodness? There are a thousand vices, a thousand enormities, which have nothing to fear from any human tribunal, but are checked and restrained by this mental judge.

That peace which you imputed to a disburdened mind, led me naturally into these sentiments. Will that peace, you ask, continue? Doubt not that it will. It is "that peace which the world cannot give," and which, therefore, the world cannot take away. That happiness which is derived from a pleasing concurrence of earthly events will vanish when Fortune reverts her wheel; the same chance which reared the brittle fabric of felicity may demolish it in a moment; but religious satisfaction, if rightly founded, cannot be overthrown.

I am well assured, Constantia, that you will find your happiness increased by the repeated exercises of devotion. It is impossible that the intercourse we have with infinite goodness should not be attended with present advantages.

But ever let it be your care, my amiable friend, that your devotion be rational and serene. Let it not rise upon the wings of passion, but be offered up with a subdued and dis-

passionate decency. Let your mind be clear and composed when you address yourself to your God, lest by any means you should speak unadvisedly to the Father of wisdom, and "offer the sacrifice of fools."

Wonder not if I tell you that all your passions should not be absorbed in heaven. Rational devotion is not founded in the glowing ardours of human sensibility; the more it partakes of these, the more remote it will be from that spiritual and intellectual worship which is paid to the Father of lights by superior natures. The adoration of passion is blind and impulsive; that of reason is clear and intelligent. By this worship the Deity is rationally honoured, by that he is implicitly adored.

For these reasons, Constantia, I would not recommend to you those books of flaming devotion, which, while they kindle the heart, confuse the head, and turn sober piety into wild enthusiasm. If the authors of such books meant to serve religion, they were mistaken; for true piety differs as much from such en-

thusiastic ravings, as the cheerful temper of serene health from the delirious wildness of a fever. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Whatever is spiritual is dispassionate. Such is God himself, and such ought to be the worship we offer him.

Adieu! my Constantia. May God keep you in his protection, and enlighten you by his grace.

FRANCIS.

LETTER IV.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

THEODOSIUS is not dead. The polite Theodosius still lives in the venerable father Francis. When I received your last favour my hand trembled, and my heart shrunk. Every idle, every wild expression, every effusion of vain imagination and uncorrected passion, that had dropt from my pen when I last wrote to you, rose up and reproached me before your seal was broken. While I read the first period of your letter, I frequently took my eye from the paper, and endeavoured to recollect the contents of my own. With fear and apprehension I proceeded from line to line; but when I found that you had overlooked many of my foibles, and touched the rest with so delicate, so indulgent a hand, O my paternal friend! what floods of tender sorrow fell from the eyes of your Constantia! Surely the kindness of those whom we revere, and are conscious of

having offended, is more cruel than their severity could be. The heart would oppose itself against severe treatment, and call in pride to its aid: but against the force of kindness there is no shield.

In what an amiable light do you represent that goodness which brought us into being! Conscience was undoubtedly one of his gracious gifts. That moral inspector, whose suggestions so lately gave me pain, is now the principal author of my happiness, and I find that conscience is not more severe as an enemy, than kind as a friend. Was it not this that supported the sufferer of Uz, and was he not animated by the suffrage of conscience, when he wished that man might be permitted "to plead his cause with God?" If I am mistaken, correct me, my guide, my father, and my friend!

CONSTANCE.

LETTER V.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

I AM pleased with your reference to the book of Job, as it gives me an opportunity to tell you with what delight I have always read that beautiful dramatic poem. The divine author of it had sacrificed to truth and nature. His character of the pious sufferer, however exalted, is not exaggerated by any unnatural strokes. While he is not permitted to fall into impious exclamation against the decrees of Providence, he complains of his distress with the sensibility of a man to whom "wearisome nights were appointed." Hence the afflicted patriarch sometimes alarms us with passionate wishes for death, and sometimes awakens our compassion with affecting sighs for his former happiness.

In the passage you have referred to we are presented with another turn of mind. "I am sensible," says he, "of the innocence of my

life. I have done no wrong, neither has any violence been found in my hands; and yet my face is deformed with weeping, and the shadow of death frowns upon my eyebrows. Yet thus circumstanced, and thus innocent, my prayer surely may be heard. Behold, even now my witness is in heaven, and my advocate is in the realms of the highest. My friends continually deride me; but my tears plead silently with God. O that a man might plead his cause with God, even as the son of man pleadeth the cause of his friend." In another of his speeches there is a passage much to the same purpose. "O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat, I would order my cause before him!"

There is no doubt, Constantia, that in these sentiments the patriarch was animated by the suffrage of conscience. And there is not a passage in his whole story that is fraught with more important instruction: for it may teach us that, under all the circumstances of

human calamity, our only refuge is in the eternal providence; and that our peace must be derived from that approving conscience which may encourage us to refer our cause to God. From what other source can we, in such circumstances, look for happiness? Dependent beings have it not to bestow. Were man in his social nature a more exalted creature, the dispensation of peace would not be in his power. He could not remove from others those evils to which he should himself be exposed, nor brighten the prospects of futurity, whither his influence cannot reach.

Man, as being circumscribed in his nature, and subject to events which he cannot command, must, if left to himself, fluctuate in uncertainty, and struggle with disappointment; he, therefore, that would hope with confidence, and enjoy with security, must have a resource which time and chance cannot affect. This can only be in that independent Being, in whose hands are "the issues of life and death."

Shall we trust to human power? "The strength of man is but as the grass of the field, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower that fadeth." Shall we trust to human riches? "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." Shall we trust to human wisdom? "Wisdom herself is the daughter of affliction." Shall we trust to human friendship? "In the day of adversity there is no hope in man." Can power preclude the attacks of misfortune? Can riches delight in the hour of mourning? Can wisdom guard against the stratagems of chance? Has friendship a charm for the languor of sickness? How feeble would these supports prove, Constantia, in the trying hour of adversity, or in those moments of awful suspense, when we expect that "the everlasting doors" of futurity shall be thrown open, and we shall "enter in!"

Better founded, my friend, will be the supports of that man who refers his cause to God, and whose conscience encourages him to rely on the eternal providence. He de-

pends on a power that is superior to all events; on the riches of divine goodness, which can never be exhausted; on that wisdom which can see the remotest consequences of things; and on that friendship which no caprice can change. The man of Uz had the strongest conviction of this truth: for experience had taught him that human greatness was "lighter than vanity itself;" that riches did actually "make themselves wings and flee away;" that the wisdom of man was "little more than that of the wild ass's colt;" and that his friendship was scarce in proportion to his wisdom. His three friends, whose knowledge should have directed, and whose affection should have soothed him, he often heard with reasonable impatience, prescribing resolutions to which human nature was not equal, endeavouring to deprive him of his greatest support, the consciousness of his integrity, and sharpening his pains by mortifying reflections. Then it was that, destitute of all earthly consolation, he appealed to heaven, and even

wished that, by a personal communication with the supreme Power, he might be permitted to lay his cause before him.

It is our happiness, Constantia, that this appeal of the patriarch is not necessary for us. The Christian covenant, gracious in every dispensation, has given us "an advocate with the Father," who shall plead our cause: an advocate who knoweth well the frailties of human nature, and whose intercession can never be ineffectual. Let us, my friend, make ourselves acceptable to him; let us lay hold of those terms of redemption which he has procured for us, and our eternal interests will be established on a sure foundation.

You, my Constantia, are among those that have "chosen this good part;" you have laboured for the bread of immortality, and have left that "which perisheth" to the numbers who "disquiet themselves in vain." Let such be pitied, my friend, and not despised; for spiritual pride has its origin in

such contempt, and it is one of the many unchristian qualities of blind enthusiasm: nay, you should even watch over your pity; for there is a kind of pity that is allied to contempt.

Born with the gentlest heart, and ever accustomed to adore, with the purest piety, the Author of your being, your religion is become habitual, and you know not the difficulty with which a heart long devoted to vice must be reformed.

Man, though born with faculties to reach through the depths of time, and powers to flourish through the ages of eternity, seldom looks beyond the present hour, or is affected but by present objects. The immortal soul, confined to this mansion of earth, becomes enamoured of her habitation, and in time persuades herself that "here she has a delight to dwell." Hence she is solicitous how she may repair the tottering wall, and support the frail fabric. Yet surely this attachment is strange, Constantia; since, notwithstanding her solici-

tude for its preservation, this frame will soon fall, and very soon moulder into its native earth. Yet a little while, and every breast that is now warm with hope, and busy with design, shall drop into the cold and senseless grave. The eye that is reading this page shall be closed in darkness, and the hand that writes it shall crumble into dust.

In that hour, when the immortal spirit shall exchange this transient being for the allotments of eternity; in that awful hour, Constantia, what shall support us? Nothing but the consciousness of a well conducted life. That divine confidence in the Father of nature—that peace of God which passeth all understanding—that serene affiance—that exalted repose of soul; these are the fruits of a life long resigned to God, and directed by religion. Yet surely these are well worth our transient labours: if these are not secured, we have lived and we have toiled in vain, we have given our "money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not."

Live, my Constantia, supported by that gracious power whom you serve, supported by his providence, and enlightened by his grace.

FRANCIS.

LETTER VI.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

WELCOME, sweet peace of conscience! Lovely stranger! daughter of religious duty, welcome! How heavy was my heart, how painful my hours, in thy absence! how gloomy and dissatisfied! With what anxiety and uneasiness did I arise from the most comfortable of all duties, the holy sacrifice of prayer! The incense seemed to rise unacceptably: my prayers were feeble; they were unable to reach the throne of the Almighty, and returned, but not with happiness, to my own bosom. To the possession of thee, sweet peace, what are riches and honours? What were the wealth of kingdoms, the acquisition of worlds, purchased at thy expence?

O my paternal friend, how forcible is truth, divine truth! With what pleasing conviction did every ray of it, that illumined your last letter, shine upon my heart! How poor did

the interests, the pleasures of this world appear, when compared with the pure, " the peaceable wisdom that cometh from above."

Father of lights, ever grant me this wisdom! Let the prayers of my father and my friend co-operate with my own, at thy eternal throne, and procure for me the blessed influences of thy sacred Spirit.

This, my venerable guide, is the substance of my daily prayer, which, since I received your instructions, I have repeated with greater assiduity. I have ever been convinced that the divine concurrence was necessary to assist us in the discharge of our duty, as well as to direct us in the knowledge of it; but that emphatical prayer which concludes your letters, " that the eternal Providence would enlighten " me with his grace," has given new force to my convictions.

I will not prescribe to you the subject of your letters. I shall listen with pleasure and attention to your instructions, to whatever point of duty or of doctrine they may be di-

rected; but allow me to wish, my revered friend, that on this important doctrine of grace I may soon receive your valuable observations.

Possibly this divine dispensation may be necessary in a greater or in a less degree than I suppose it to be. I have received different accounts of it from the professors of our holy faith, but I think that all of them have concluded it to be necessary for us, though in what measure it was necessary they have not agreed.

It is generally understood that this divine grace is the consequential privilege of Christianity, purchased for us by him who died for our redemption; yet I have sometimes thought that the author of the book of Psalms prayed for this enlightening grace in that passage which you have quoted in one of your letters, "My God, lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not the sleep of death."

With respect to this opinion, as well as to the necessity or expedience of divine grace,

and the degree in which it is dispensed, I wait your kind instructions.

Those books of flaming devotion which you have advised me not to read, I own I have hitherto been too fond of. Particularly since I entered upon the conventual life, I have been much conversant in such books. They were recommended to me by my lady abbess, who is a good woman; but her devotion seems not to be of that serene and temperate kind which you describe and approve. She is unequal in her religious deportment, being sometimes elevated, but more frequently depressed.

What do I not owe to you, my father, for procuring me the book of God in a language I understand? Agreeably to your directions, I make that my principal study, and trust that "it is able to make me wise unto salvation."

Never, I hope, in the heart of your Constantia, shall that spiritual pride you mention find a place. I am too sensible of their unhappy condition "who live without God in

the world," to look upon them with any other emotions than those of pure compassion. With the heart that is destitute of religious peace my own has been a fellow-sufferer; and should I triumph in my comparative happiness or purity, should I thence derive any sentiments of contempt for others, the reflection would rather mortify than soothe me, since I should appear to despise in them what I myself had been.

The hour of prayer is at hand—I come; daughters of devotion, I join you: and now will I once more entreat the Author of life and death long to spare you for the comfort and support of

CONSTANCE.

LETTER VII.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

I INTENDED to make the dispensation of grace the subject of a letter, and I thank you for putting me in a method of treating it.

Your first question is, Whether this dispensation was only the consequential privilege of Christianity? or whether it was not also the privilege of Judaism?

The latter part of this proposition you infer from that poetical petition of the psalmist, "My God, lighten mine eyes, &c." Now, Constantia, it is obvious enough to suppose that the king of Israel might pray for the illumination of the divine Spirit, as his son and successor prayed for wisdom, though under their system "there was no promise of the ordinary dispensations of grace." It would be natural for a people who were visited by God, and beheld, on so many occasions, the interposition of his providence, to apply

to him for his assistance under the conflicts of religious duty. It would be still more natural for them "who sat in darkness," to petition for that light, of which some emanations were communicated in the extraordinary influences of the Spirit, though, agreeably to the scheme of the eternal and unerring Providence, the perfection of it should not be displayed till "the fulness of time."

This may be sufficient to answer your first question, which is rather curious than useful.

With respect to the necessity or expedience of the divine grace, I have much more to say. The philosophers of our system, who weigh every thing in the scale of natural obligation, or moral aptitude, exclaim against this doctrine of grace. If you admit the impulse of a superior agent, where, say they, is the moral agency of man? Besides, is it agreeable to the fitness of things that God should prescribe a law to man, to which his moral powers alone are not adequate? This, continue they, would be to make God an Egyptian taskmaster. The

moral powers of man must be adequate to the duties appointed him, and the doctrine of grace is therefore superfluous.

At this avenue, which is opened by the christian philosopher, in rushes the philosopher of nature. He takes up the argument where the other laid it down. You have very rightly observed, Sir, says he, that God would be an Egyptian taskmaster, if he gave us a law that we were unable to live up to: such, I insist upon it, is the law that is said to be from him; from him therefore it cannot be.

Thus, Constantia, you see the consequence of philosophizing in religion. Give up one redoubt to the enemy, and he turns our batteries against us. To both these ungracious opponents I shall give a short answer. To the christian sophist I say, that the powers of man may be inadequate to the law of religion, though its origin was from God; and to the philosopher of nature I answer, that the law of religion may be from God, though the

powers of man are inadequate to it. The same argument will prove both these points.

A perfect law might be given to imperfect beings without any impropriety: it might be given to make them exert to the utmost the powers of their nature, and strain to higher degrees of virtue for the high prize of their calling; it might be intended to encourage an useful emulation, by making still greater degrees of excellence attainable; it might be designed to prevent indifference and independence, which man would naturally have suffered to grow upon him, when secure, by his own power, of attaining to moral perfection, and of discharging every duty enjoined him. A dependance on the Almighty for assistance in the conduct of life is productive of many advantages. It prevents that pride and carelessness which are too often the effect of security and independence. It opens an intercourse with the Deity by prayer; which, though the most delightful part of religious duty, would become unnecessary the moment

that the aid of divine grace should be found to be so.

From these co-operating causes, Constantia, you see how expedient is the dispensation of grace. How necessary it is for us in our present state, we need not make appeals to reason, but to experience.

To be ignorant of the sacred truths of religion, and to be destitute of the communicable influences of God's holy Spirit, has been always considered by good men as the most deplorable condition of human wretchedness. Hence we find it represented in the sacred writings by the terrible images of darkness, of death. "Those," says the prophet, "that sate in darkness have seen a great light, and they that were in the region and the shadow of death, on them hath the light shined. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. My God, lighten mine eyes that I sleep not in death." This was the petition of that prince whose devotion was so pure and exalted, that

the Almighty himself bore testimony to his excellence in pronouncing him a " man after his own heart." And could he, " the light of Israel;" could he, distinguished for his knowledge of the then revealed religion; could he, illumined with the spirit of prophecy, think it necessary to pray for the enlightening grace of heaven, and should not we much more? we, who cannot, like the prophet, boast any superior portion of the divine Spirit, and who have yet, with him, the same propensities to evil.

On us, indeed, " the sun of righteousness hath shined." To us is displayed a perfect knowledge of those saving truths, those exalted doctrines, that were then only seen in types and shadows. It is our happiness to know the perfect will of God, revealed by his son Jesus Christ. The sacred Scriptures contain every thing necessary to salvation. There every moral duty is clearly stated, and every point of faith sufficiently discovered. To these fountains of light and immortality we

may apply, without deception, for that knowledge which "leadeth us into all truth."

Blessed be the gracious author of our salvation! the veil of partition is now taken away; those types and figures, which were the shadowings of good things to come, are removed, and we know what we worship.

It is for us then on whom the light hath shined, to be willing, at least, to rejoice in that light. It is for us with unwearied assiduity to study the holy scriptures, "which are able to make us wise unto salvation." Whatever attainments we make in science, if we neglect this, the only true wisdom, our knowledge and our industry are vain. Whatever skill, whatever prudence, we possess in the economy of this life, if the acquisition has been made by the neglect of this knowledge, it is skill that darkens, and prudence that destroys.

The rude notices of natural reason alone can never be sufficient to direct us in every

part of our conduct. Those lights, though useful and universal, are liable to be obscured by the blaze of passions, to be enfeebled by vice, or misled by error. The understanding may be made subservient to the heart, and employed in the defence of what we wish, rather than what we ought to do. The force of truth may be overcome by habit, and, like the heathen statuary, we may fall down before an image of our own framing. It is essentially necessary therefore that we should have some certain rules of action, some plain directions laid down for our conduct, which can neither be perverted by sophistry nor misconstrued by error.

Such, Constantia, is the necessity of that external information which has been ordinarily dispensed to us by the Spirit of God; which while I have been attending to, I have not lost sight of my argument.

The same causes which concur to make the outward evidences of the Spirit of God so necessary for our information, render the in-

ternal aids of his grace as necessary for our direction and support in the discharge of our duty.

To acquire a consummate knowledge of the holy scriptures is not alone sufficient to conduct us to the land of everlasting life. These are the leading star by which we must direct our course, but other means are necessary to guard us from the tempest above, and the shoals below. The ocean of life is treacherous and uncertain. Many latent dangers await the passenger, and he is frequently in the greatest peril when he thinks himself the most secure.

Shall I change the scene, and suppose that we have an earthly passage to the city that is not made with hands? Yet in that case, how many circumstances of danger to the traveller does the allegory afford me! A thousand accidents concur to make us deviate from "the narrow way that leadeth to life." We are on one side threatened by horrible precipices, on another invited by prospects of

beauty. Despair points out to us the length and difficulty of the journey, and weariness importunes us to seek the vallies of repose.

The object, indeed, at which we finally aim, would infinitely counterbalance every inconvenience. And "the sufferings of the present time" will bear no comparison "with the glory that shall be revealed among us." But objects placed at a distance, however important, never strongly affect us. As in the attraction of bodies, if those with which they sympathize be far removed, they will adhere to others more near, to which they have less relation.

Some portion of divine grace, some measure of God's holy Spirit, is indispensably necessary for every Christian. Mere human wisdom, though assisted by the knowledge of the divine revelation, will not always be sufficient to support us in our duty. How often, with the conviction of truth upon us, are we insensibly drawn into the ways of error! How often, in the consciousness of determined in-

tegrity, are we betrayed into vice by the stratagems of temptation! Though we may in general be very sensible of our duty, yet we have not at all times the same capacity of attention, nor the same readiness of apprehension, to distinguish good from evil. The faculties of the mind are sometimes vigorous, and sometimes languid. The will is frequently retained by idleness, or solicited by desire, without receiving any instructions from reason; and the economy of the soul is oftener in disorder than that of the body.

In such circumstances, Constantia, have we not need of some superior aid? Want we not the directive influences of the Spirit of wisdom, to keep us in the narrow paths of duty? Can there be any doubt that the ordinary dispensations of grace are necessary?

But in what degree, you ask, is this grace ordinarily dispensed? To which I must beg leave to answer, that "God giveth not his Spirit by measure." It is enough for us to know what he hath declared, that his grace

is sufficient for us. It must be necessary in a greater or a less degree, in proportion to the different tempers, situations, and circumstances of mankind: and to the prayers and endeavours of each a sufficiency thereof will be dispensed. To our prayers, and endeavours, I say, it will be dispensed; agreeably to which we are told, that "our heavenly Father will give of his holy Spirit to them that ask it in his Son's name." And while we are informed that "it is God who worketh in us," we are commanded to "work out our own salvation." Thus, Constantia, a sufficiency of the divine grace is promised to our prayers; promised to co-operate with our endeavours. And it is thus that the economy of grace interferes not with that freedom of will on which all our merit, as rational creatures, is founded. Our prayers and endeavours are voluntary acts, and we are consequently as much at liberty to lay hold of the dispensation of grace as of redemption, and as much at liberty to reject it, to resist or to quench the Spirit.

Were not this the case, Constantia; were the dispensation of grace entirely independent on our own will, the moral agency of man would be superseded, and the doctrine of rewards and punishments would be vain. If, according to the doctrine of fanatics, the grace of God be an impulsive principle, partially bestowed, and actuating us as mere machines, then the Almighty has taken our salvation entirely into his own hands, and rendered moral virtue an empty name.

But this doctrine will on the conclusion be found blasphemous to God, and injurious to mankind. For if God be the sole agent of our salvation, to him it must be owing if any soul perish: and if moral virtue be vain, the flood-gates of vice may be thrown open, and the world be overwhelmed with the deluge.

But if God be the sole author of our salvation, and if his grace be an impulsive principle, which we cannot resist, then no soul shall perish; for we are expressly told that " God is

not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." If it should be replied that some do perish, nay that many go on in the broad way to destruction; then I answer, that God has not the power to do what he is willing to do. He is willing that none should perish; and yet you say that some do perish, therefore there are some whom he has it not in his power to save. Now God is all-powerful, consequently he must have dispensed with his power in that respect by making the salvation of man conditional. If we accept not the mercies of the gospel on the terms that are offered to us, God himself can do no more for us; God himself cannot act inconsistently with his own laws. Every attribute of the supreme perfection must be perfect: justice and truth are his essential attributes; his justice and his truth therefore must be perfect.

You see, my friend, how wretchedly founded is that fanatical doctrine which represents the grace of God as an irresistible principle,

acting unconditionally, and impelling men to salvation. You see what dishonour it would bring upon the Deity, what disorder amongst mankind, and how inconsistent it is with the sacred writings.

If therefore the grace of God be a conditional, not an irresistible principle, it will, as I observed before, be dispensed only in a sufficient degree: that is, it will effectually cooperate with our own endeavours in working out our salvation. More than this we have no right to expect from the grace of God. Infinite wisdom will not do what is not necessary to be done. The extraordinary influences of the Spirit are ceased, because they are no longer requisite; therefore, though many miracles may be done by the intercession of departed saints, yet I believe none of those saints, such I mean as existed since the apostolic era, did any miracles when living [b].

[b] This is a very modest degree of faith for the father of a convent: the Editor, for his part, believes as much the living as the posthumous miracles of those saints.

St. Paul himself, in his first epistle to the converts at Corinth, tells them that the miraculous power of the holy Spirit should cease, but that charity, which was a moral race of Christians, should still remain, in consequence of those ordinary dispensations of the Spirit that should continue with the church.

Whatever, therefore, appears to exceed these ordinary influences of grace, the raving flights of enthusiasm, and the rage of fanatic zeal; the sudden impulses of devotional rapture, and the wild reveries of Tartuffian dreamers; all these are the fruits of insane imagination, and cannot proceed from that pure and peaceable Spirit which cometh from the Father of lights.

The office of that Spirit is to inform the mind with a right sense of its duty, and to animate and encourage it in the discharge of it. In this light it is properly called by our Redeemer that Comforter which should "lead us into all truth, and teach us all things."

How much are those offices misrepresented

by the followers of Calvin, and by enthusiasts of every denomination! What visionary communications, what suggestions of sick fancy, have those delirious dreamers imputed to the Spirit of wisdom! as if God would render vain that faculty of reason which characterizes man by his own image, and as if the enlightening Spirit of grace would rather obscure than illumine the understanding, these unthinking men have charged upon the operations of that Spirit the most extravagant effects of wild insanity. Under the influence of imaginary calls some have preached, and some have prophesied. The mechanic has forsaken his awl, and his wife her distaff, and, with heads full of glorious visions, together they have issued into the streets and highways to publish the everlasting gospel.

It will always be difficult for devout ignorance to distinguish between the suggestions of imagination and the influences of the divine Spirit. Unaccustomed to abstracted thinking, or even to draw conclusions from the most

simple propositions, the ignorant are unable to form any judgment of that mode of inspiration which should be most consistent with the wisdom of Providence. They consider not that it must be more agreeable to infinite knowledge to invigorate the nobler faculty of reason, and to bring the passions into subjection, than by inflaming them to weaken that faculty, and by so doing to put darkness for light. Hence all the waking dreams of blind enthusiasm are cherished and respected as the offspring of grace; and the mistaken visionary ascribes to the author of reason such impulses and communications as could only exist in a mind where reason was impotent.

But the delusions of innocent enthusiasm would hardly deserve attention, were they not sometimes productive of consequences that render that enthusiasm no longer innocent. From the belief of divine impulses the flames of persecution have been lighted, and the altars of superstition have been adorned; the sanguinous have been prompted to indulge

their natural thirst of blood, and the gloomy have forsaken the society of human creatures, and inhabited caves and cells in solitary sanctity. This species of religious retirement I have ever condemned; but my objections do not affect the conventual life, for there is great difference between retiring to a cave in some unfrequented desert, and entering into a religious society [c]. Many more than these have been the effects of mistaken impulses. The history of the church in every period abounds with them.

Yet how easy is it, upon reflection, to guard against these delusions! What is the end of divine grace? It is only to aid us in the knowledge and in the discharge of our duty. Therefore whatever impulse hath other tendency than these, it cannot be of God; be-

[c] There is, indeed, as father Francis observes, a difference between these two sorts of retirement; but, in the Editor's opinion, the difference lies only in the mode; for they are equally repugnant to the determinations of Providence, which has made the whole moral duty of man to consist in the social capacity of serving his fellow-creatures.

cause it is not agreeable to his wisdom to do what is superfluous. A sufficiency of his grace is what he alone hath promised us, and what alone it is consistent with infinite wisdom to give. Will the Father of lights amuse his creatures with dreams and reveries? Will he sport with their passions, depress and elevate, inflame and distract them? Will he not rather assist such as call upon him faithfully, to bring those passions into subjection; and to confirm in its proper empire the nobler principle of reason? Is not such the mode of operation that the all-wise Creator would assign to his assisting Spirit? "The wisdom that cometh from above," we are told, "is pure and peaceable:" such wisdom is congenial with our reason, which is a clear and steady principle; and therefore it must act in concurrence with that principle, at least its effects cannot be repugnant to its conceptions.

Thus, Constantia, by the information of the revealed word, and by the use of that reason which God has given us that we may be

able to understand his will, we learn the nature of such dispensations as his wisdom hath thought proper to communicate to us.

I have extended my observations on this subject further than you desired, or might expect, because the doctrine of grace is an important subject, and the right understanding of it may not only preserve us from many absurdities and indecencies in religious duty, but from many dangerous errors both in practice and belief. When once the heart gives itself up to blind fanaticism, we cannot tell to what attempts it may be seduced, or where the influences of unrestrained, and (what will almost always be the consequence) of misdirected passions may lead us. When the imagination triumphs over reason, the economy of the mind is destroyed; and confusion, with insanity in her rear, approaches and usurps the empire of the soul.

May every ministering spirit of heaven guard the peace of my Constantia! May her piety be uniformly rational and calm! May

the incense of her devotion rise from the altar of reason, the voluntary sacrifice of gratitude! May she ever know whom she worships, and remember that an intellectual Being requireth an intellectual adoration! In every act of worship, and in every point of duty, may she be constantly supported and directed by the pure and peaceable Spirit of truth! By that Spirit may she be enlightened to discern those finer relations that exist between the Creator and the creature, undistinguished by the eye of human intelligence; and learn from thence not only what is due, but what is acceptable to God. Under every circumstance of life may she be happy in ease, or contented in resignation; and when the short thread of life is spun, when she enters upon the inheritance of immortality, may she receive the fulness of those blessings which infinite Benevolence has in reserve for those that honour him.

FRANCIS.

LETTER VIII.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

How beautiful does the religion of Christians appear when beheld with the eye of reason! How amiable the benevolent author of it! Surely, my revered friend, there is a secret delight in the investigation of divine truths, and the discovery of them affords the greatest of pleasures. Your most obliging letter on the subject of grace gave you, I presume, no less satisfaction in the writing, than it afforded me in the perusal; and I think I can discern in the more animated passages of that letter those pleasing sensations you felt when the light of religious truth shone the clearest to your eye. If I am not mistaken in this, and if your pleasure in writing that letter were equal to that which I found in reading it, you have had a better reward than my poor thanks can give you.

You have justified the scheme of Provi-

dence in the dispensation of grace against every objection that has been or can be brought against it. You have placed in a clear light the benevolent purposes of the Father of mercies in that dispensation, who has made man dependent on him for the assistance of his divine Spirit, only because he has a delight to give it, and because it must be the happiness and comfort of his creatures to receive it. It plainly appears from your account of it, that the economy of grace interferes not with that freedom of will on which all moral goodness must be founded, and without which we could neither be capable of virtue nor vice, neither entitled to rewards, nor liable to punishment. It appears that the moral agency of man may be exercised in the application of the divine grace, and that he is at liberty either to apply or to reject it.

With respect to the degree to which it is dispensed, you have, no doubt, rightly observed, that as God will not do what is unnecessary, no more than a sufficiency of it will

be granted to our prayers: and as to the mode of its operation, it is surely consistent with the wisdom that gave us reason for our direction, to render by his grace the efforts of that reason effectual, in subjecting the passions, and reducing them to the obedience of his holy laws. By a rational worship, you have observed, in a former letter, that God is most honoured; when, from a due and dispassionate consideration of his benevolent works, we come, from a principle of gratitude, to offer him a reasonable sacrifice. This sacrifice would indeed be no longer reasonable, were we irresistibly impelled to offer it by the influences of a superior agency: we should then be the instruments of a worship paid to God, but we should not be the worshippers; and with what delight should the eternal wisdom look upon our sacrifice, when conscious that it proceeded not from a voluntary discharge of duty, but was the inevitable consequence of his own agency? With what propriety could he say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant,"

when he himself had been the agent, and the servant no more than a machine in his hands? To suppose then that the divine grace is an irresistible principle, must be " to charge God foolishly;" and whatever reverence I have heretofore paid to those misdeeming enthusiasts who hold this doctrine, I must now retract it, and shall, for the future, rather pity them as mistaken, than respect them as inspired.

But I will own to you, my paternal friend, that I should not so easily have become the disciple of reason, had you made that faculty a dictator on its own authority; but when you only make it instrumental in the application of truths revealed, as that is, undoubtedly, the purpose for which it was given us, I cannot but agree with you in every conclusion you have made.

How shall I thank you for the repeated instances of your care and kindness; for those ardent wishes that glow in the last page of your letter; those prayers for your Constantia's happiness and safety? O may they be

heard at the throne of everlasting mercy! and rise not unaccompanied with those daily offerings which she delights in making for the preservation of her friend. Adieu!

CONSTANCE.

LETTER IX.[d]

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

As you were not displeased with my account of the dispensation of grace, I will now give you my thoughts on a duty, to the due discharge of which that dispensation is promised. I have observed before, that, were the grace of God an unconditional and irresistible principle, our prayers would be superfluous. Had the almighty Providence formed an irreversible

[d] The Editor has been favoured by some gentlemen with objections to certain passages in this letter, and by others with answers to those objections. To both he acknowledges himself obliged. The former were kind in their desire to set him right, where they supposed him to be mistaken; the latter in their readiness to adopt and defend his opinions.

The lady who requested that the Editor would prescribe a form of prayer agreeable to the principles laid down in this letter, would certainly be obeyed, did he not hope that this would some time or other be done by abler hands. At the same time, that lady may be pleased to observe that general forms can only be calculated for public worship; and that the peculiar exigencies of individuals will at once require and suggest particular forms of prayer.

decree with respect to our salvation, or were he totally uninfluenced by any thing that we should do in order to obtain the aid of his sacred Spirit, our acts of devotion would be as absurd as every other act of duty would be vain. Yet there are many, Constantia, who hold this doctrine: because the Christian covenant is called the covenant of grace, they annihilate the moral agency of man, and represent him as entirely passive in the accomplishment of his salvation. I have sufficiently exposed the errors of this unscriptural doctrine, and shall therefore proceed to consider prayer as one of the means of grace.

Our Saviour himself, who "died for our sins, and rose again for our justification," (that is, for our deliverance from eternal death; for the word justification [e] in the sacred writings generally signifies deliverance, and in that sense I understand it in this passage) our Sa-

[e] The Editor has had the pleasure to find the present Bishop of Lincoln of his opinion, with regard to this sense of the word Justification.

viour himself, I say, whose merits with the Father were the primary means of procuring us this grace, expressly convinceth us that it is to be obtained by prayer. For, in the first place, this was the method by which he proposed to obtain it for us—"I will pray to the Father," says he, "and he will send you another Comforter, who shall abide with you always;" and in the next place, he assures his disciples that his heavenly Father will give his holy Spirit to them that ask it. The passage is express to the purpose. "I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Which of you, being a father, if his son shall ask bread, will give him a stone? Or if a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Nay, and if he should ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much rather shall

your Father, who is in heaven, give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?" The pains that the divine reasoner hath taken to convince his disciples upon this point of faith are very remarkable. He first commands, or rather exhorts, them to offer their prayers to God; then, for their encouragement, he assures them that such prayers are heard and granted; and afterwards, for their conviction, he infers an undeniable conclusion from a parity of reason. Thus there remains no doubt, that as the mediation of Christ is the primary, so prayer is the secondary, means of grace.

In what words, then, and with what spirit shall we pray? "Wherewithal shall we come before the Lord, and humble ourselves before the high God?" Is not, it may be asked, that form of prayer which our Saviour taught his disciples, comprehensive of all our wants, and sufficient for the Christian church in all ages? Should this question be put, I would answer in the negative. The prayer which our Saviour taught his disciples was a temporary

form. The redemption of mankind was not then accomplished: the means of grace were not effectuated. The Saviour of the world was not ascended into heaven, and it was in consequence of his ascension only, that the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, was granted to the church. "If I go not away," says he, "the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send him unto you." It was impossible, therefore, that he should teach his disciples to pray for that grace which was not yet attainable, nor communicated, except in an especial manner. Some subtle interpreters have, indeed, supposed that the meaning of "thy kingdom come," in the prayer above mentioned, is metaphorical, and that the influence of grace is thereby signified; but (setting aside those arguments I have brought against the possibility of this interpretation) I would ask these men, whether it be probable that the wise author of our salvation should teach his disciples to express so important a petition by a distant me-

taphor? Whether he who taught them plainly to say, "give us this day our daily bread," would not, if it had been then proper, have taught them as plainly to say, "give us the grace of thy holy Spirit," or to have expressed themselves in some other form of words as clear, and as much to the purpose. Had the words, "thy kingdom come," no signification that was literally obvious, they might as well have been wrested to one sense as to another; but the kingdom of God was an expression familiar to the ears of the disciples, and to them it required no comment. They knew that it meant the establishment of the Messiah's evangelical kingdom. Another argument that this form of prayer was temporary, and is now insufficient, is this, that the apostles made use of other prayers. To prove this it is not necessary to adduce a single instance, because numbers offer themselves.

Neither is it necessary for me to instruct you, Constantia, in what words you should pray for the assistance of the divine Spirit.

Eloquence is in nowise essential to prayer; it may be necessary for the persuasion of men, but God "setteth it at nought." Let us not think that we shall be heard the sooner for our much speaking, nor yet for the elegance of our expression. If we pray by a set form, let the language of it be artless and unaffected, and in that respect resemble the singleness or simplicity of heart with which we should offer it to the all-knowing Wisdom. I would readily give you such a form as I speak of, but the church alloweth not a private ecclesiastic to compose and communicate a form of prayer. For you, however, whose understanding is clear, and whose memory is retentive, who digest your thoughts with propriety, and express them with ease, scarce any form of private devotion is necessary[f].

With regard to the spirit and manner wherewith we ought to approach the eternal

[f] How idle have been all the disputes concerning the preference of praying by form, or praying extempore! Both have the preference in their proper place; the former in public, the latter in private devotion.

Providence, we cannot be too attentive to so important a circumstance. We should endeavour, as much as possible, to be serene and recollected. Before we address that Almighty Being, we should meditate a moment on his sublime perfections, and fill our minds with the idea of his glorious attributes. But rather let us contemplate him in his benevolent, than in his juridical capacity. We ought indeed never to be without the idea of the latter, but the first should always have the leading influence in our minds. Our heavenly Father treateth us not as servants, but as sons; our acts of obedience, therefore, to him should be purely filial. He delighteth not in the prostration of servile fear, but in the cheerful worship of reverential gratitude. Let us not approach him with the cries and lamentations of Moloch's worshippers, nor with the self-castigation of the votaries of Baal. Yet on this, as well as on every other occasion, let us remember the vast distance between fallen man and his Creator; let us consider that our

God, though seated on the throne of everlasting mercy, is an offended Being, whose laws we have broken, and to whose favour we have forfeited our natural right. These reflections will make us approach him with that humble and dependant spirit which must become a frail and erring creature, in the presence of its almighty and all-perfect judge.

Let the incense we offer him be the pure and undissembled devotion of the heart. Let us avoid the pharisaical ostentation of long prayers. Our moral and religious, as well as our natural wants, may be expressed in few words, and God is not slow to hear. One penitential sigh, one humble acknowledgment, will find its way to heaven. One earnest petition for the divine assistance, one sincere expression of gratitude, will be as effectual as a thousand repetitions. Diffuse and declamatory prayer is a mark of fanaticism, the bold and extravagant effusion of holy impudence. Shall we think that the Divine Wisdom is to be courted by much speaking? Is it necessary

that the sincere of heart should weary Heaven with long importunity? Would not this be to suppose that God is hard to be entreated, or that his ear is obstructed, and cannot hear? How brief is that temporary form of prayer which our Saviour taught his disciples! Does that form contain one superfluous word, or one mere collateral or unimportant thought? Is the imagination indulged in vain descriptions, or are the passions roused to eager imprecations? As if the divine author of it had foreseen the idle prolixity of those ranting prayers which should be used in future ages of the church, he has in the above-mentioned form been remarkably concise. There is not, perhaps, in any language, an instance of composition where so much is expressed in so few words.

It must be owned, however, that to express our thoughts with brevity and precision, must be the effect of literary skill with us, as it was of divine knowledge with the author of the disciples' prayer. But from the brevity of

that prayer we may learn, what may be of more general use, to offer no superfluous addresses to the Almighty. If we look into many of our modern forms of prayer, particularly such as have been composed by Christians for their private use, and afterwards printed for the service of the public, we shall find that this precept has been very much neglected. With a profusion of depreciating expressions, partly taken from the sacred writings, and partly the coinage of their own imaginations, as if they would make a merit of their self-abasement, they are loud in complaining of themselves as the worst of creatures. This is a burlesque upon Christian humility. I have known a pious lady, whose life was one continued scene of devotion, daily repeat these humiliating lies when she offered up her prayers to the Father of truth and wisdom. Our Saviour's approbation of the publican's prayer affords no argument in favour of these. The publican was supposed to be really a sinner, not in the ordinary, but in the extraordinary,

sense of the word; yet even he makes no parade of humiliation. He, though a publican, does not call himself the worst of men, but saith simply, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This was all that he said, and all that was necessary for him to say.

These over-abasing forms of prayer are not only improper for the Christian who leads a regular life, but must likewise be repugnant to his conscience, and obnoxious to his sincerity. It is impossible that, while he is sensible of his good disposition, and endeavours to live according to the divine laws, he should believe himself to be the wicked wretch that his prayers represent him.

I have yet one objection more to these humiliating rants, these effusions of fanaticism. They are not only improper for the good man, but unnecessary for the sinner; at least on the part of God they are unnecessary: For, of God can it be supposed, that he is ignorant of our conduct, and must learn it from a multitude of self-abasing words? Or

shall we think that he delights in the frequent mention of that wickedness, the practice of which offended him? Or may we believe that he will be prevailed upon by the loudness of tautological exclamation? If these things are not to be supposed, we shall conclude that these harangues of self-abasement are unnecessary with respect to God, and that it will be more proper, as well as more modest, for the sinner to use the brief acknowledgment of the publican.

Long and loud confessions of sin before God, are always a mark of weak understanding; nay, I have known some ecclesiastics so extremely injudicious as to recommend this practice in private devotion, and so weak as to advise us, in our addresses to God, to mention particularly the several sins we have been guilty of. Is not this to suppose that God is even such a one as ourselves? Or is it not to conceive yet more meanly of him? When a person is disposed to ask forgiveness of those whom he has offended, and

to acknowledge his faults, would a generous mind be delighted with a recapitulation of them? Would it not rather be painful to a generous mind? And shall we dare to think that man is possessed of greater generosity, or more enlarged conceptions, than that infinite Being from whom he derives both? Why then, ye self-abasing sinners, will ye weary God with your mistaken prayers? Why will ye offer to the divine ear what it delighteth not to hear? Can ye not be humble, without importuning heaven with your acts of humility? Is not this a species of eye-service?

Let us consider the parable of the prodigal son, which may in some measure be looked upon as a form of repentance. He had meditated, we are told, a short speech of acknowledgment. "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and no longer am worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." This confession he meditated, and this was as brief, for the circumstances, as the prayer of the publican.

But what do we find in the sequel of the story? We find that this short speech was rendered still shorter by the omission of the last clause. The penitent son, after he had met with such a gracious reception from his father, probably concluded that such an humiliating overture would give him pain; or if he were about to make it, the father interrupted him, by calling to his servants, and ordering the best robes. Observe, my Constantia, the skill of the sacred parabolist in this place. "And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and no longer am worthy to be called thy son. But the father said unto his servants, Bring forth the prime robe, and put it upon him." Is not the omission of the last clause in the premeditated speech ("make me as one of thy hired servants") after such a reception, remarkably beautiful? When this is considered, does it appear in the least probable that the father should either expect or take delight in a detail of his son's follies and vices?

As an act of repentance, with respect to God, such a detail cannot be necessary: for what is repentance but a relinquishment of sins, from a conviction that they have offended the Judge of the world?

I have said more on this circumstance than I at first intended, and possibly more than you may think the importance of it required: but let it be remembered, that nothing is unimportant that relates to the worship of God, and that he who contributes any thing to rectify that worship, labours not idly in the service of religion.

For this reason, you will favour me with your attention, while I point out some other errors that I have observed in forms of devotion. Among these are impertinent expressions, such as have no immediate relation either to the general or particular purposes of prayer; such as are introduced merely for parade, or such as have no other end than to fill the harmony of a period, or to form the side of an antithesis. Of these I could pro-

duce many instances, from almost every form of prayer, whether public or private, from profuse expatiations on the past and present works of God, and from superfluous details of our conduct towards him; when with careful minuteness we inform him of circumstances which he knows better than ourselves.

Neither can I approve of those devout rhapsodies, those sportings of zeal, that holy dalliance with God, which swell the morning and evening devotions of many pious Christians. These desultory effusions are inconsistent with that reverence which is due to an Almighty Being.

In short: let us, when we pray, be modest, humble, calm, and recollected; and let our forms of prayer be chaste, subdued, concise, and pertinent.

When we approach the Almighty, let us not borrow our ideas of him from human characteristics: let us remember, "that his ways are not our ways, neither are his thoughts our thoughts; that as much as heaven is higher

than the earth, so much are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts." This reflection will at all times teach us a becoming reverence for our glorious Creator; and particularly, in our addresses to him, it will suggest to us the impropriety of vain and impertinent declamation, of the ostentatious effusions of holy impudence, and the importunate familiarities of forward zeal.

Adieu! my Constantia. May you offer up your prayers in an acceptable time!

FRANCIS.

LETTER X.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

YOUR letters displease me, my paternal friend, they make me displeased with myself. Every page is a mirror that reflects some circumstance of folly or ignorance in my past conduct. When I compare my opinions and my practice with those which you recommend, I am mortified with beholding some essential difference. But go on, dear cruel instructor, go on to humble the proud heart of your Constantia. Make her see in yet many more instances what a weak, ignorant, short-sighted, creature she is.

But indeed you ought to conquer that vanity which in former days you contributed to strengthen; when, too prodigal of compliment, you would over-rate the talents of your Constantia; and, in the humility of tender affection, would profess yourself her pupil! Be patient, and indulge me. You make me

sensible of my weakness: I am yet a woman, and must complain; I will have my revenge, and convince you of your errors. Do I not owe much of my pride and vanity to you? Did you not in the days of flattering love cherish and support those unserviceable foibles? Having no other ambition than to please Theodosius, if he appeared satisfied with my accomplishments, I thought them sufficient: if he praised my talents, I believed them to be great; and was indifferent about new acquisitions of knowledge. Thus, my friend, I bring a heavy charge against you, and impute to you, in some measure, my pride and ignorance. Thus it is, that while your letters convince me of the latter, I gratify the first by a flattering excuse. Poor Constantia! how much of human weakness dost thou yet retain!

You have much to do, my venerable guide, much to do before you shall have rendered your pupil as wise and as good as she ought to be.

What means this uneasiness that hangs

upon my heart? Surely your letter, your valuable letter, could not cause it. And yet I think I had less pleasure from it than from any other that you have written to me. Was it because you have not so often appealed to me by the endearing name of your Constantia? To you, my confessor, my guide, and friend, I can open all my weakness. What means this uneasiness that hangs upon my heart?

CONSTANCE.

LETTER XI.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

AMIABLE tenderness! Dear Constantia! set your heart at ease. Exert your reason; tax your fortitude; call forth the nobler faculties of your mind, and charge them to assert their empire over the wayward passions.

While we are in this state of being we must encounter difficulties, and struggle with uneasiness. The heart will often be dissatisfied we know not why, and reason will stand an idle spectator, as if unconscious of its power. In such cases it ought to be awakened from its lethargy, and reminded of the task to which it is appointed. It should be informed of the high office it bears in the economy of the soul, and be made acquainted with the insidious vigilance of its enemies.

But while we languish under the uneasiness of discontent, we cannot take a more effectual method to recover our peace than to

consider the insignificancy of every passion that centers, and pursuit that terminates here. Suppose our earthly aims were directed to their object by the favouring gale of fortune; suppose our pursuits should be crowned with all the success that flattering hope assigns them, yet vain, changeable, and impotent, as we are, the success would not be worth a moment's triumph. While the heart turns upon an earthly axis, like the perishable ball that it loves, it will be variously affected by outward influences. Sometimes it will bear the fruits of gladness, and sometimes be the barren desert of melancholy; one while it will be exhilarated by the sunshine of pleasure, and again it will languish in the gloom of discontent. The cause of this is, not only that the human heart is in itself changeable and uncertain, deriving its sensations from constitutional influences, but that the objects, if they are earthly objects, on which it depends for happiness, are liable to variation and decay.

Hence arises the superiority of religious

views. When our hopes of happiness are fixed on one certain event; one event which, though remote, cannot be altered by mortal contingencies, the heart has an invariable foundation whereon it may rest. Without this resting place, we should be tossed to and fro with every wind of fortune, the sport of chance, and the dupes of expectation. To this immoveable anchor of the soul religion directs us in the hopes of immortality. We know from the unerring word of divine revelation that we shall exist in another state of being after the dissolution of this; and we are confirmed by every benevolent purpose of Providence in the belief that our future existence shall be infinitely happy. In this glorious hope the interests of a temporary life are swallowed up and lost. This hope, like the serpent of Moses, devours the mock phantoms which are created by the magic of this world, and at once shews the vanity of every earthly pursuit.

Compared with this prospect, my Con-

stantia, how poor, how barren would every scene of mortal happiness appear! How despicable at the best, yet how liable to be destroyed by every storm of adversity! For, are we not exposed to a thousand accidents, the most trifling of which may be sufficient to break a scheme of felicity? Let us consider those conditions that are almost universally desired, the dignity of the great, and the affluence of the rich. Are these above the reach of misfortune? Are they exempt from the importunities of care? Greatness is but the object of impertinence and envy, and riches create more wants than they are able to gratify. Should then our wishes lead to these, we should unavoidably be disappointed. The acquisition might for a while soothe our vanity, but we should soon sigh for the ease of obscurity, and envy the content of those whom pride would call our vassals.

If wealth or grandeur then cannot afford us happiness, where shall we seek it? Is it to be found in the cell of the hermit? or does

it watch by the taper of solitary learning? Loves it the society of laughing mirth? or does it affect the pensive pleasures of meditation? Is it only genuine in the cordiality of friendship, or in the lasting tenderness of married love? Alas! my Constantia, this train of alternatives will not do. Should we fly from the troubles of society to some lonely hermitage, we should soon sigh for the amusements of the world we had quarrelled with. The strongest mind could not long support the burden of uncommunicated thought, and the firmest heart would languish in the stagnation of melancholy.

Ask the solitary scholar, if ever, in his learned researches, he beheld the retreat of happiness. Amusement is all that he will pretend to. Amusement! in quest of which the active powers of the mind are frequently worn out, the understanding enervated by the assiduity of attention, and the memory overburdened with unessential ideas.

Yet, possibly, happiness may mingle with

society, and swell the acclamations of festive mirth. No, the joy that dwells there cannot be called happiness; for the noise of mirth will vanish with the echo of the evening, and "even in laughter the heart is sad." If we are able to distinguish the elegance of conversation, we shall often be disgusted with the arrogance of pride, or the impertinence of folly; and if not, we may be amused indeed with the noise, but can never taste the pleasures, of society.

As little reason have we to hope for lasting happiness from the engagements of friendship or of love. The condition of human life is at best so uncertain, that it is even dangerous to form any connexions that are dear. The tenderness of love, my Constantia, opens the heart to many sufferings, to many painful apprehensions for the health and safety of its object, and many uneasy sensations both from real and imaginary causes. It was from this conviction I told you, in the letter wherein I first discovered myself to you, "that the love

we have had for one another will make us more happy in its disappointment, than it could have done in its success."

For want of a better remedy to these evils, the wisdom of ancient philosophy teacheth us to bid a brave defiance to the assaults of pleasure and of pain. This precept it urges with unremitting austerity; without making any allowance for particular tempers or circumstances; without instructing us how to behave to the solicitations of joy or pleasure; how to defend the heart from the inroads of sorrow, or to guard against the unseen stratagems of distress.

But the religion of a Christian affords a nobler and a safer refuge. With the exalted hopes that this presents to us, "the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared." In those glorious hopes let us bury every anxious thought, the uneasiness of discontent, and the solicitude of care. Let us not sink under our light afflictions, which are but for a moment. A very few years, per-

haps a few months or days, may bring us into that state of being where care and misery perplex no more. "Though we have now our bed in darkness, and our pillow on the thorn," yet the time draweth nigh when we shall taste of life without anguish, and enjoy the light without bitterness of soul. "The night is far spent," my Constantia, "the day is at hand; let us therefore gird up the loins of our mind, and be sober;" no longer dissipated or disturbed with the troubles of this world. We are hourly hasting to that scene of existence "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest;" where hope shall be no more pained with disappointment, and where the distresses of time are forgot in the joys of eternity.

FRANCIS.

LETTER XII.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

Is it thus that you hope to reform your Constantia? Do you think that you shall be able to effect this by letting her foibles pass uncensured, and conveying instruction to her in general terms? Alas! how little do you know of her petulant and capricious heart! It must be corrected with severity, and quieted by overbearing reproof.

At present, indeed, it is sufficiently depressed. Your observations on the folly and vanity of expecting happiness in this world came to me at a time when painful experience convinced me of their truth.

After Theodosius was lost to me, I contracted a friendship with an amiable and accomplished lady, to whom my melancholy and my misfortunes served only to endear me the more. Her good sense and her compassion

soothed and supported me under all my sufferings. She left me not to the attacks of solitary discontent, but assiduously diverted my mind by the efforts of elegant humour, polished sense, and ingenious observation. As if she had preferred the company of sorrow to every social amusement, even in that season of life when the heart of health and peace is always gay, she never forsook me during the last five unhappy years. She observed with unwearied vigilance the hour when melancholy apprehension was increased to the acuteness of grief. She then followed me into whatever privacy I sought; clasped me to her faithful bosom, and if, under the agonies of terror and anguish, tears refused their assistance, she solicited and obtained them by her infectious tenderness. When, at last, I determined to take the veil, and had obtained my father's consent to forsake the world for ever, her affection followed me in that final resolution. She waited only for an approaching opportunity to

settle her worldly affairs, after which she intended to have made one of our sisterhood, and to have passed the remaining part of her life with her Constantia.

Upon this event my heart reposed. I foresaw in this a scene of happiness that could not be equalled upon earth, and I flattered myself that it would be as lasting as my own life. How many pleasing hours have I passed in meditating on the future felicity of our friendship! How often, in the luxury of imagination, have I considered our united prayers ascending more acceptably to the throne of everlasting mercy! What joy did I promise myself, what importance in the eye of friendship, by communicating to my Sophia all the instructions I had received from my Theodosius.

Oh my friend! my father! these hopes are overthrown. Do I live to tell you by what means? Sophia, my tender, my dear Sophia, is no more. The uneasiness I expressed in my last proceeded probably in some

measure from my presentiments of this cruel event. I am now very miserable, and in great need of your paternal advice.

CONSTANCE.

LETTER XIII.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

As true friendship is one of the greatest blessings of human life, our sorrow for the loss of friends is more excusable than most of our complaints. But, though it may be more venial, it is not more reasonable, than any other mode of misery that has its origin in disappointment. Did we think our friends immortal? Did we not know, while we held them to our hearts, that we were embracing the property of Death, who would sooner or later assert his claim?

Our resignation to this as well as to all other evils ought to be confirmed by reflecting on the universal agency of Providence. The author of the book of Psalms furnishes us with excellent doctrine on this subject. We have scarce any where such striking pictures of human misery as in that book. The royal writer has described in the strongest colours the distresses

and perplexities to which, as men, we are subject. He has descended to the private dissatisfactions of the heart, and recounted many circumstances of accidental calamity. Hence it is that his writings are of general use. Of the distresses that are incident to our being, though the prospect be gloomy, it is necessary we should observe it; as he who must make his way through pitfalls and precipices, would choose a plan of the road he was to travel, rather than march blindly forward without knowledge and without caution.

But these are not all the instructions which the Psalmist affords us. We are seldom presented with an afflicting prospect of life without being directed to the means of comfort. We are told that, however great the causes of our affliction may be, they are subject to the wise directions of a Being benevolent to man, and that, though "heaviness may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning." The doctrine of an universal providence, which is the only source of consolation under every spe-

cies of misery, is asserted through this whole book with the greatest confidence and certainty.

" Who is like unto the Lord our God, who hath his dwelling so high, and yet humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth?"

" Thou shalt shew us wonderful things in thy righteousness, O God of our salvation! Thou that art the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea."

" They also that dwell in the uttermost parts of the world shall attend to thy tokens. Thou that makest the out-goings of the morning and the evening to praise thee."

In this belief of the universal agency of Providence the Psalmist places the remedy of moral and natural evil.

" Should I find trouble and heaviness, I will call upon the name of the Lord. O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul!"

" The Lord preserveth the innocent: I was in misery, and he helped me."

"The proud, O Lord, have had me exceedingly in derision, but I remembered thy everlasting judgments, and received comfort."

The last sentiment ought to be engraven upon the hearts of all the children of affliction.

Let us remember that God is the supreme governor of the universe; that under his direction is the whole system of nature, by him animated, connected, supported. Let us consider that the agency of man in this system is only moral. The economy of life is committed to him so far as it may exercise his moral will. But the events of his actions are finally under the determination of the Almighty. Were not he to direct the natural course of this world, even in those circumstances of it that are or may be affected by the moral power of man, order could no more be preserved in the universe, than it could at first result from chance, or be formed by the direction of fallible beings.

This consideration, that the supreme Power

has in his own hands the economy of the world, ought to engage our resignation under every circumstance of life: for, should we quarrel with the dispensations of him who gave us being? Should we dispute the regulations of that power who has provided the means of this day's subsistence, and without whose favour and protection we could no longer exist? Is not he who made the world best able to govern it? Has not he who gave us this being a right to resume it?

What mean, then, the pangs of disappointment? What mean the languishing complaints of sorrow? The tears that flow for buried virtue, and the sighs that mourn for parted friendship?

But to these questions you will say that others may be opposed. You will ask if these emotions ought to be excluded from the human heart, when they are evidently the effect of nature? You will inquire whether the God of nature would plant affections in his creatures, which to stifle would be a virtue?

To these questions I would reply, that those affections for the objects of this world, which we have received with our being, may be indulged; but under certain limitations. Let us always consider the end of such affections. Certainly it could not be to create us misery, when those objects are no more; for that would be indirectly to repine at the dispensations of him who has removed them from us.

The voice of nature will be heard, and our tears will flow when our dearest connexions are broken. In this we only act like men: but when sorrow is long indulged, it becomes criminal; for then we tamely give ourselves up to those passions which it is our duty to restrain, and act in petulant opposition to the decrees of Providence.

Human life must have many avenues to sorrow and anxiety, while we are concerned for the welfare of those objects which have engaged our affections, or the success of those schemes on which all our wisdom has been employed. The duty of resignation therefore,

like every other that is enjoined us, is calculated to promote our own happiness. When we remember the "everlasting judgments of God," we may reasonably "be filled with comfort in all our tribulations."

"It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth unto him good. It is the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, and in truth."

"Why should ye say unto my soul, that she should flee as a bird unto the hill? Behold the Lord, the Lord of Hosts is my refuge; the God of Jacob is on my right hand.

Under such confidence as this, what have we to fear, and for what should we sigh? That misfortunes seem to counteract our schemes of happiness, and that the prospects of hope are clouded by disappointment, we might mourn indeed, were this the only scene of our existence, and were our views terminated by our departure from it. That human knowledge is often inadequate to the purposes of life, and always imperfect, would be a

melancholy consideration, were it not attended with the prospect of an existence where knowledge, as well as happiness, shall flow from the fountain of infinite perfection. By this view we may obviate the pangs of disappointment, when prudence is defeated by the caprice of fortune, and when the petulance of chance has made a jest of sagacity.

This reflection might, one should think, be sufficient to set our hearts at ease with respect to temporary misfortunes, but still more powerful will be the motives to resignation, when we consider that the Father of heaven has not only promised us a safe retreat at last from our afflictions, but to support us under them.

"These things have I said unto you, that in me ye might have peace: in the world ye shall have tribulation."

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them falleth not to the ground without the permission of my Father who is in heaven. Are not ye of more value than many sparrows?"

That man in the system of nature has a peculiar regard shewn him, it would be superfluous to observe. None of us can be so blind to the bounties we enjoy, nor to the eminent prerogatives by which we are distinguished. But I may infer, that as the favour of the Almighty is so evidently seen in man, his confidence in him, under every circumstance of life, ought to be in proportion. If he is distinguished by the light of reason, he ought not surely to make that light an instrument to censure the perfection from which it flows; yet discontent is a kind of censure on Providence.

Alas! my dear Constantia, how mistaken is the man, how much an enemy to his own happiness, who confides not in the measures, nor resigns to the dispensations of his Creator! He robs himself at once of that sovereign remedy of evil, reliance on a superior power. He is involved in calamities without the alleviation of hope, and subject to misfortunes without redress.

But happy, above all names of happiness,

is he who with grateful humility submits to the determinations of God. The vicissitudes of fortune cannot distress him. He is secure in the care of Almighty Goodness. Nature may shrink back from the stroke of affliction, but the conflict that is supported by hope can neither be long nor painful.

"Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Trust in God."

The great object of his hope, the perfect happiness of a future existence, he knows, cannot be very distant; that he has but to travel a few days longer till he reach the mansions of everlasting rest, where the miseries and delusions of mortality shall vanish, and "sorrow and mourning shall flee away." Adieu, my Constantia! Think of these things and be happy.

FRANCIS.

LETTER XIV.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

WITHOUT waiting any return to my last, I once more sit down to write to you. I would in some measure imitate that dear and valuable friend you have lost, whose assiduous tenderness, you say, would never leave you to the attacks of solitary sorrow. This was wisely done when your grief had continued unreasonably long, but I am always of opinion that under the first stages of sorrow the mind should be left to itself; and would our common rules permit me to visit you, I should decline it till the violence of your grief subsided.

The objection, however, does not lie with the same force against writing to you. We can better bear the sentiments of our friends, when they are not personally witnesses to our weakness.

My design at present is not to instruct but

to amuse you. I therefore send you poetry instead of philosophy, or rather, indeed, philosophy harmonized; for the sentimental part of the following composition is large and noble.

PSALM CVII.

PSAL. CVII.

1 O GIVE thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

2 Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of the enemy;

3 And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

4 They wandered in the wilderness, in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

6 Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.

7 And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

8 O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound with affliction and iron;

PSALM CVII.

Yet once more wake the strain of grateful praise
To that eternal Power whose mercy shines
O'er all his works, immortal! Let them wake
The grateful strain once more, those happier sons,
Whom his hand rescued from the hostile chain
Of old captivity! From climes remote,
From the first openings of the orient day,
From Hesper's silver floodgates, from the star
That shoots its pale rays o'er the shivering north,
From Egypt's tyrant shores, his parent voice
Their scatter'd trains assembled. Long they stray'd
Thro' wild woods unfrequented; long; nor found
City, or safe abode; till nature sunk
With meagre want opprest, and the faint pulse
Of life beat weakly. Then with humble prayer
To Heaven they turn'd repentant, nor unheard.
Eternal Mercy led the wanderers forth
To habitable towns, and safe abodes.
O for the spirit of exalted praise,
To blazon high those acts of power divine,
Those boundless mercies that embrace mankind!
From him our various appetites and powers,
Moral or sensual, meet supply derive.
They, thrice unhappy! o'er whose joyless heads
Grim darkness hovers; they who lonely dwell

11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High:

12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour: they fell down, and there was none to help.

13 Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.

14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.

15 O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

16 For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

17 Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death.

19 Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble; he saveth them out of their distresses.

20 He sent his word, and healed them; and delivered them from their destructions.

21 O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare his wonderful works to the children of men!

22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

In death's uncheerful shade, afflicted, bound
In cold imprisoning chains, the sad reward
Of impious daring, and rebellious deeds,
When heavenly Justice, with her radiant arm,
Smites their proud hearts; e'en they, by humble prayer,
Unfold sweet Mercy's easy-sliding gates;
Their iron bondage bursts, and forth they rush
From death's dim shadow to the golden day.
O for the spirit of exalted praise,
To blazon high those acts of power divine,
Those boundless mercies that embrace mankind!
Before his puissant arm the brazen might
Of strong gates shivers, and in pieces falls
The firm bar.
Folly's vain votaries, from disorder wild,
And mad intemperance, reaping painful fruits,
Disease and languor, to the dreary door
Of death move trembling. Then with humble prayer
To Heaven they turn repentant, nor unheard.
Health's rosy light relumes the languid cheek,
And Ruin quits his meditated prey.
O for the spirit of exalted praise,
To blazon high those acts of power divine,
Those boundless mercies that embrace mankind!
Let man for ever wake the grateful strain,
The sacrifice of reason; ever sing
His Maker's works, and triumph in the song.

23 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

24 These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.

25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to their depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.

27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man; and are at their wit's end.

28 Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivereth them out of their distresses.

29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

30 Then are they glad, because they be quiet, so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

31 O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground;

34 A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

35 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs.

The bold adventurers on the stormy breast
Of ocean, tenants of the wat'ry world,
Mark in the mighty waste of seas and skies,
Magnificence Divine. At his command
The swift wind sweeps the billows; up they rise
Infuriate to the vault of heaven, then down
Precipitately steep, disparting, ope
The vast abyss voracious. Ah! where then,
Weak mariners, your hopes? Then the heart faints.
From side to side they run, they reel, they fall,
Inebriate with confusion. Nought remains
But trembling prayer, the last appeal to Heaven.
Nor vain the last appeal. Already, see!
The rapid storm subsides, and the wave sleeps.
Alert within the merry sailor's heart
Springs hope; and soon he hails the welcome port.
O for the spirit of exalted praise,
To blazon high those acts of power divine,
Those boundless mercies that embrace mankind!
From the full choir of undistinguish'd crowds,
From Wisdom's chosen synod, crown'd with years,
To him for ever flow collective praise!
Where in wild sweetness rose the sallying spring,
Where spread the copious river, where display'd
The vale its verdant honours, barren lies
A dry waste, mark of Heav'n's avenging hand;
When sacred Justice spoke the doom of guilt.
But lo! where once the dry waste barren lay,
There in wild sweetness flows the sallying spring,

36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;

37 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

39 Again they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

40 He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.

41 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.

42 The righteous shall see it, and rejoice; and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

43 Who are wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

There spreads the copious river, there displays
The vale its verdant honours; hamlets fair,
Rich harvests, blushing vineyards, golden fruits,
And flocks abundant, the long-famish'd swain
Beholds delighted. Heav'n's peculiar care
Are all affliction's children: when the yoke
Of stern oppression sinks the weary heart,
Perish the stern oppressors; low in dust,
Low lies each princely head; while guarded safe,
As flocks reposing in their evening fold,
The peasant sleeps in peace. O sight of joy
To faithful piety; of conscious pain,
And keen conviction, to the heart of guilt!

There is no employment so delightful to a devout mind as this attention to the visible administration of providence. To contemplate the Creator of heaven and earth in the magnificence of his works, enlarges and elevates the soul; lifts it above the impertinence of vulgar cares, and gives it a kind of heavenly pre-existence. To consider the benevolent purposes for which he called forth this variety and multitude of being, that comes under our cognizance, must be a perpetual source of comfort. A rational creature, that is conscious of deriving its existence from a being of infinite goodness and power, cannot properly entertain any prospect but of happiness. By the imperfection of its nature it may fall into temporary evils, but these cannot justly be the subject of complaint, when we reflect that this very imperfection was necessary to a probatory life, and that without it there could neither have been virtue nor the rewards of virtue. Every degree of excellence depends upon comparison. Were there no deformity

in the world, we should have no distinct ideas of beauty: were there no possibility of vice, there would be no such thing as virtue; and were the life of man exempt from misery, happiness would be a term of which he could not know the meaning.

But I wander from my design, which was not to philosophize. Be wise and happy. Adieu!

FRANCIS.

LETTER XV.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

If I could pronounce my heart to be perfectly at ease, you would have the only reward you desire for your kind, your paternal care. But shall I, on the contrary, avow my ingratitude? Shall I own that this obstinate, this petulant heart is not yet at rest? Could it oppose itself to the united efforts of reason and religion? Would it neither be soothed by harmony, nor silenced by philosophy? Vain, incorrigible heart!

Indeed, my venerable friend, I must not dissemble with you: I have not yet recovered my former peace. And yet why? I have the same confidence in the administration of Providence. I believe as much in his goodness, as much in his wisdom. I attend, with the same readiness, on the duties of religion, and offer up my prayers with the same affiance. I agree to every conclusion you have drawn

either from moral or religious arguments. I acknowledge the propriety, the duty of resignation under every circumstance of affliction, and yet I am afflicted. I see the absurdity of grief, yet I am grieved. What can I do more? I submit entirely to the dispensations of Providence. My will submits. I do not wish to recall my departed friend to life: but this submission does not clear my heart of sorrow. Surely it has some connexions which are not obedient to the will, and from which it derives involuntary pleasure or pain. Is not this true? We experience it in all instances of affection: we are sensible of attachments we cannot account for; and as those attachments are facilitated or interrupted, we are happy or miserable independently of reason or the will. If these observations are founded upon truth and nature, I hope I shall stand excused both before you, and at a higher tribunal, for those tears that have fallen over the grave of my Sophia.

Think not that I implicitly give myself up

to the dominion of sorrow. I have been too well acquainted with her not to know by what means her influence is increased or abated. I do not deepen the gloom of melancholy by solitary reflection; I seek the society of the sisterhood, and endeavour to enter into their amusements, as well as to join their devotions. In those hours when I must necessarily be alone, if the uneasiness of my heart hinders the approach of sleep, I have recourse to my books; till at last the weariness of attention prevails over the force of sorrow, and procures me that rest which the latter would have prevented.

In the course of this reading I have met with many things on which I wanted to consult you, but most of them have escaped me. Some of these, however, I remember. In a book of divinity, which, I suppose, must have been written by one of the heresy of Calvin, the author asserts that "the Almighty has appointed a day of grace to every man, beyond which there can be no remission of

sins[g]." I must own I was startled by this assertion, as it seemed to me to be very consequential. The following, I think, were some of the texts on which he founded this belief.

"Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near."

"Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

"Again, he limiteth a day, saying, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

In another part of his book he maintains that it is impossible for those who fall into sin, after having once been converted, to repent, or to be saved[h]. This doctrine he supports by the following passage in the epistle to the Hebrews:

"It is impossible for those who were once

[g] Many of our modern Fanatics, Methodists, &c. hold this doctrine.

[h] This is another doctrine of Fanaticism.

enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame."

To this passage he adds another, selected from the same book.

"If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?"

I must own these texts appeared to me to make very strongly for his argument; and yet, if these doctrines were generally received, I think, they would open more avenues to despair; for many Christians, I fear, must have sinned wilfully after repentance and conversion. But, possibly, I do not behold these scriptures in a right point of view. Let me hope for your kind instructions; and pray for your

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER XVI.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

You do well to amuse yourself by books and company; that amusement will divert your melancholy more effectually than any precepts of philosophy.

But what shall I say to your controversial studies? Shall I praise you for wearying your eyes over the pages of Calvinistic dreamers? for honouring with your attention the groundless doctrines of narrow-sighted fanatics; who, either from want of knowledge or of candour, or more probably from want of both, have seized a limb of a text, and, without attending either to the writer's design, or to the analogy of his reasoning, have founded upon the mere letter doctrines that dishonour their God!

Such, and so founded, are those you have mentioned.

That God hath appointed a certain period

in the life of man, beyond which he will not extend his grace to him, is a doctrine which is so far from having any foundation either in reason or revelation, that it is repugnant to the first, and totally unsupported by the latter.

The texts which your author has produced in support of his opinion have no manner of connexion with it.

" Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near."

The whole chapter from which this passage is taken refers to the time of the Messiah's first appearance. The prophet breaks out into raptures upon the view of that glorious era; and apostrophizes to the people that should then be born, exhorting them not to lose the happy opportunity of making an interest with the Redeemer while he was personally present with them.

" O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

This is Christ's apostrophe to Jerusalem, when he foretold its approaching destruction. But what, in the name of the seven wonders, has this to do with the universal dispensation of grace? The words are particularly applicable to the occasion on which they were spoken, and to the object whereunto they were addressed. "Unhappy city! I wish thou knewest, 'in this thy day,' while thou art yet undemolished, or while I am present with thee, 'the things that belong unto thy peace,' thy everlasting peace, the mercies of redemption; 'but now they are hid from thine eyes;' at this time thou perceivest them not."

Or possibly "thy peace" may signify, thy temporal peace, and preservation from thine enemies, which interpretation the following verse seems to favour. "But now they are hid from thine eyes. Because the days will come upon thee, when thine enemies," &c. I incline to this sense; but whether this or the other be the true one, is quite immaterial to the economy of grace.

Let us now consider the last scripture which your author has adduced in favour of his doctrine.

"Again, he limiteth a day, saying, To-day, if ye will hear his voice."

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, in the chapter from whence this passage is taken, endeavours to prove the certainty of that final rest which still remained to the people of God. Thus he forms his argument; "That there is a rest for the people of God into which they have not yet entered, appears from that prophetic psalm of David which alludes to the time of Christ's appearance upon earth. The prophet, referring to that time, saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice. You see he is determined as to the point of time; he limiteth or setteth apart a day: wherefore from this passage it is apparent, that for you, Hebrews, for you the descendants of those who provoked God in the wilderness, and were not permitted to enter into his rest, a final rest still remains, to which you are invited."

Thus it is, my Constantia, that the disciples of ignorance, folly, and fanaticism, by disjointing and misconstruing the scriptures, contrive their absurd doctrines; which are always as much repugnant to reason, as they are unsupported by revelation. For instance, the tenet above mentioned. Is it consistent with the justice or the goodness of God, who has appointed to man a life of probation, to limit the advantages which, in his mercy, he has vouchsafed to him to a shorter term than his life? While he leaves him still to contend with the enemies of his salvation, will he deprive him of his principal support, the aid of his grace? his grace, which he has promised to those that ask it, without exception, and without limitation?

I have done with the first tenet of your author; let us now see whether the second be better founded.

It is impossible, he maintains, for those who fall into sin, after having once been converted, to repent or to be saved. This opi-

nion he supports by two passages from the epistle to the Hebrews. Without making any remarks on the infallibility of that epistle as a rule of faith, without taking notice of the difficulty and the late day of its admission among the canonical books, I shall shew you that your author has made the passages he has selected from that book prove too much. What the writer of the epistle means by "falling away," in the first passage, and by "sinning wilfully," in the last, is the denial of the faith they had professed, and openly apostatizing from it. This is clear from the conclusion of both the passages. Those who "fall away" are said "to crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and to put him to open shame." And he who "sinneth wilfully" is represented "to have trodden under foot the Son of God, to have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and to have done despite to the Spirit of grace."

From hence it appears that for a down-

right apostate there is no hope of repentance or remission of sins. But your author has not confined this terrible denunciation to open apostasy. According to him, none who have fallen into sin after conversion are capable of being renewed by repentance, or saved by the redemption of Christ. This doctrine is equally unscriptural and unreasonable.

Should man, circumstanced as he is, be exposed by frailty to final punishment, or reduced, by accidentally falling into vice, to irretrievable ruin, he might either turn from the race that is set before him in hopeless despondence, or vainly contend with danger and disgrace. The pilgrimage of human life is infinitely troublesome and perplexed. Dangers there are and difficulties which all must encounter, which can neither be eluded by vigilance, nor annihilated by contempt.

A just man, says the author of the book of Proverbs, falleth seven times, and riseth again. In this place a certain is put for an uncertain number; seven times being among

the Jews an indefinite expression, used to signify any moderate number.

Our Saviour himself being asked how oft a brother should offend and be entitled to forgiveness, and whether or not till seven times, answered, " not until seven times, but till seventy times seven." From this passage we have the utmost reason to hope that whenever man shall effectually repent, the divine goodness will be ready to forgive him. For if we are commanded to receive into favour an offending brother, however frequently he may have trespassed against us, shall not our heavenly Father in like manner be ready to receive such as turn unto him? Shall God recommend such a conduct to man as he should not admit in himself? Are we not told that the repentance of a sinner is unexceptionably so acceptable to the Almighty, that the angels in heaven rejoice, and congratulate their supreme and affectionate Creator on an event so agreeable to his gracious mind?

The prodigal in the gospel returns not to

his father till he had finished his course of riot, which was interrupted by nothing but his power to pursue it. He returns not till compelled by necessity, and therefore his repentance was not a voluntary virtue. But, behold, his father meets him while yet a great way off, and precludes his apologies by the most endearing reception. We have not, indeed, any account of a relapse in the accepted prodigal; but we are told that before the execution of his repentance, he said unto himself, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, while I perish with hunger? Some such reflections he must frequently have made, when reduced to distress, and again probably must have quitted them from various motives.

We want not, however, this instance to prove that a sinner may be restored to favour after falling away from his former resolutions and professions of obedience. The example of Peter is a sufficient proof in this case. To this I shall add another which, though not of

scriptural authority, is respectable, and very much to the present purpose.

Eusebius tells us, that St. John, during his ministration to the western churches, cast his eye upon a young man remarkable for the extent of his knowledge, and the ingenuousness of his mind. The aged apostle thought that he had discovered in him an useful instrument for the propagation of Christianity. Accordingly he took particular pains to convert him, and to instruct him in the divine doctrines of his great Master. That he might be still better acquainted with the system of Christianity, at his departure, he recommended him to the care of a pious old father, who had some authority in the infant church. The youth continued a while in the duties of his new profession, and attended with care to the lectures of his venerable tutor. But his former associates, when they found themselves deserted by him, were grieved at the success of the apostle, and exerted their utmost efforts to regain so useful and so

entertaining a companion. They succeeded in their attempts, and the father was forsaken. The apostle after some time returned to those parts, and "where," said he, with impatience, to his aged friend, "where, my fellow-labourer, is my favourite youth?" "Alas," replied the good old man, with tears in his eyes, "he is fallen, irrecoverably fallen: he has forsaken the society of the saints, and is now the leader of a gang of robbers in the neighbouring mountains." Upon hearing this unexpected and unpleasing account, the apostle forgot his sufferings and his years, and hastened to the place of rendezvous, where, being seized by some of the band, he desired to speak with their captain. The captain being told that a strange pilgrim asked to be admitted to him, ordered him to be brought before him. But when he beheld the venerable apostle, his hopes of amusement were changed into shame and confusion, and the hardy leader of a band of robbers trembled before a poor unarmed old man. He quitted

once more the society of wickedness, and lived and died in the service of his Redeemer.

From hence it is evident, that a relapse after repentance or conversion was not looked upon by the primitive Christians, nor yet by the apostles themselves, as any means of excluding the future mercies of God.

An utter apostasy, an entire desertion of the faith we have professed, and a contemptuous rejection of the grace we have received, may, according to the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, render us incapable of repentance, and utterly disqualify us for the future mercies of God. But sins inferior to these will not reduce us to the same dreadful circumstances. Our Creator "knoweth whereof we are made, he remembereth that we are but clay; and though we may fall, yet we shall not be cast away, since he upholdeth us with his hand."

God preserve you, my amiable friend! preserve and direct you through the uncertain paths of this world, till you arrive at the realms

of everlasting rest; till your innocent, your happy spirit shall quit, without a sigh, the tender frame that confines it, and rise, conducted by some smiling angel, to the blessed society of good men made perfect!

Adieu!

FRANCIS.

LETTER XVII.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

THE everlasting doors of futurity are thrown open; the race of life is almost run, and this, probably, is the last time that your Constantia will have the happiness of pouring out her heart to you. I am seized with the first symptoms of that pestilential fever which has been so universally fatal, that it brings with it almost the certainty of death. Now, therefore, before my faculties are overcome by the disease, I devote to you one hour more of a life in which you have had so great a share.

In a situation like this it is natural to look back, and to take a view of the country through which we have travelled, before we lose sight of it for ever. The ways through which I have walked, though in many circumstances peculiar, and unlike the allotment of others, have yet, like others, been various, and different in the different periods of the journey.

Before my present illness I drew up a short view of my life, part of which I will now transcribe, that with you it may serve as an apology for my conduct when I shall be no more.

AN APOLOGY

FOR

THE LIFE OF SISTER CONSTANCE,

WRITTEN BY HERSELF,

AND ADDRESSED TO FATHER FRANCIS.

You know how early I lost the best and most affectionate of mothers. That was a misfortune which, though then only bewailed with tears which had no meaning, left behind it a cloud that overshadowed the rest of my life. Had my infant years been trained by her I should have acquired the habits of virtue from the influence of example. The want of this was much to be lamented, for there is a happy contagion in the power of living excellence, which, while we admire,

we necessarily imitate. Those virtues which we draw from precept or speculation are seldom more than speculative, but those which we derive insensibly from the imitation of exemplary characters become lasting and habitual. But, besides the loss of a happy and an excellent pattern of every female virtue, I was deprived at the same time of those maternal cares, those tender assiduities that watch over the young mind, accelerate the progress of reason, and supply the want of experience by precept. Of these advantages I was wholly destitute, for my father, inattentive to every thing but the acquisition of wealth, thought but little of the improvement of his daughter; or, if he thought of it at all, concluded that she would necessarily improve in proportion to the advancement of her fortune. Accordingly I was abandoned to the common forms of female education, without those private attentions, those exemplary influences, which are of infinitely greater importance than all general instructions.

Thus unapprehensive and uninformed, in the first thoughtless advances from childhood to maturity, is it to be wondered that the amiable and accomplished Theodosius should find an easy admittance to a heart where every passion was awake, all unguarded, and none restrained?

But the severity of wisdom itself (prudence, you have told me, is but the ape of wisdom) could have had few objections against the passion that I entertained. For did it not receive a sanction from the object? What did I admire in Theodosius? Was it a symmetry of features? Was it not the mouth that spoke like the oracles of wisdom, and the eye that darted through the depths of nature? While his knowledge enlightened, his sensibility charmed me; and while at once he taught my heart and my mind to expand, is it to be wondered that he made room for himself? The powers of genius have an irresistible charm for taste; and while Theodosius was forming the mind of Constantia, he

was cherishing a plant which, like the gourd of Jonah, as soon as it sprung up, would stretch its arms to embrace him.

When this intercourse of growing tenderness was at an end, when the obstinacy of ridiculous pride divided the families of Theodosius and Constantia, what did I not feel from the apprehension of being separated from the man I loved? Pride, however, came in to my aid; I shed a few angry tears, and commanded my heart to be at ease. But, alas! I soon found that Theodosius was dearer to me than I imagined; yet even, with this conviction, by the united influences of pride, and fear, and shame, my natural attachments to him were overborne; and, without consulting either my happiness or my inclination, I had the infatuation to acquiesce with that proposal of my father which banished Theodosius from public society.

This was the most culpable circumstance of my life; a fault which indeed brought its punishment along with it, and for which the mise-

ries of one period, and the penitence of another, have, I hope, made an adequate atonement.

The years that passed between that event and my admission into this holy retreat were miserably worn away between the languor of melancholy, and the acuteness of grief; yet that plaintive and unresigned state of mind was not, I trust, accompanied with any great degree of guilt, since it was not at the dispensations of Providence that I murmured, but at the supposed consequences of my own folly. That I refused with resolute indignation the man to whom, before, I had been so weak as not to deny my hand, was not enough to make satisfaction to my own heart. While I considered Theodosius as dead, and myself as in some measure the cause of his death, between the grief of affection, and the inquietude of conscience, I was at length reduced to the most pitiable state both of body and mind; the one emaciated with sorrow and watching, and the faculties of the other almost sunk in stupefaction.

Great distresses are the spectres of the mind, and, as it is fabled of the ghosts of self-murdered bodies, they hover over the scene where their object is intombed. Business and amusement, society and solitude, were alike impressed with the image of Theodosius; the painful idea pursued me through every avocation, nor could I find a retreat from it in the breast of friendship; the sympathizing heart of my Sophia added new softness to my own, and the tenderness of her friendship made me feel more sensibly the loss of Theodosius.

At last that dear lamented friend, with some few more that pitied and regarded me, applied to my father for his permission that I might retire into a convent. Their generosity procured me what the voice of nature and the tears of duty had solicited in vain, and by the irresistible offer of discharging the fees of my admission, they prevailed on the father of Constantia that she might be permitted to take the veil.

Since I entered upon the conventual life my conduct has been too well known to you, if not to need an apology, at least not to be enlarged upon here. But after those aspirations of gratitude that rise to heaven, after those truly grateful sentiments which I must ever entertain for those beneficent friends who procured my establishment in this place; what words shall I find expressive of that gratitude which is due to Father Francis? that tender, that affectionate father, who has nursed my mind with those paternal assiduities which were somewhat above the most perfect nature of man, which could only flow from a heart where human sensibility was exalted and refined by the immortal graces, and where God himself elevated and expanded that philanthropy which he loves.

To the ever venerable Father Francis I owe the greatest moral blessings that are attainable in this world, peace of conscience and rectitude of reason. For the recovery of the first, indeed, little more was neeessary than

the certainty that Theodosius was alive and happy; but the consolations of the father added to the presence of the friend, and replaced that quiet in my heart to which it had been so long a stranger. Those consolations, however, were not more soothing than the lessons that attended them were instructive. While from those I derived content and comfort, from these I received the lights of truth and reason, and was taught to look up with an intelligent adoration to that Being whose essence is goodness and wisdom. From the consideration of these distinguishing attributes, whenever he shall resume that life which he gave me, I shall resign it into his hands without sorrow, and without fear.

* * * * * * * *

With difficulty I had written thus far, when the importunity of my disorder obliged me to lay down the pen. I have now resumed it, and will bear it as long as I am able, for while I hold but even an ideal conversation with you, the sense of pain is suspended.

Other than bodily pain I have none. The presumption with which my apology concluded, I find, was not vain. I am perfectly indifferent to the approach of death, and, agreeably to the kind wish with which you once [i] concluded a letter, I trust that "my spirit shall quit, without a sigh, the frame that confines it."

To you, my dearest friend, my most venerable father, loved by every dear, and respected by every sacred name, to you, under the gracious appointments of Providence, I owe this happy serenity. By giving me proper ideas of the Author of nature, and the obligations of his creatures, you have taught me to look on death as one of his best gifts, and on all beyond it without any apprehension.

Behold here the reward of your pious labours! Behold with pleasure the resignation of a mind that you strengthened, of a heart that you armed against yourself.

[i] This last letter of Constantia and the answer of Theodosius seem to have been written some years after the preceding letters.

" My heart was grieved, and it went even through my reins."

" So foolish was I and ignorant, even as it were an irrational creature before thee."

" Nevertheless I am always by thee, for thou hast holden me by my right hand."

" Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and after that receive me in glory."

" Whom shall I have in heaven but thee, for there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee?"

" My flesh, and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!"

And now, O dearest, and most revered of men, farewell! Whether we shall meet again in any future allotment of being, is amongst the secret counsels of Providence. I trust we shall. Till then indulge one tender farewell from your Constantia! Accept one pious, one grateful adieu from

CONSTANCE.

LETTER XVIII.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

LET not my Constantia be alarmed when she sees that this letter is written by another hand. Let not that fortitude with which she has so greatly supported her own sufferings be dissolved in weakness for her friend, nor that noble tranquillity with which she beholds the approach of death, be disturbed when she is told that his hand is on Theodosius. I doubt not that the eternal Providence, who, in his wisdom, interwove the interests and the passions of our lives, has, in his goodness, determined that they shall close together. If this be one of his gracious dispensations, I receive it not only with submission, but with gratitude. What more could I desire of the divine Beneficence than that, delivered from this prison of earth, I might accompany the spirit of my Constantia to the regions of everlasting happiness, to some more perfect allotment in

the scale of being, where the immortal faculties shall be refined from human frailty, and where the powers of the soul shall be expanded by a nearer approach to that perfection from which they are derived. Animated with hopes, and supported by sentiments like these, let us wait without fear the approach of Death, and receive him gladly, because he cometh as a friend. Indulge, my Constantia, the pleasing hope that our souls will know each other in their future appointment. The pure passions of love and friendship, founded upon, and supported by esteem, may last beyond the grave, because they have their existence in the soul. And will not that Being, whose essence is love, support and cherish those connexions which are agreeable to his commands, and those sentiments which are congenial with his own divine nature? Will he, who commanded us to "love one another," extinguish in the grave those virtuous passions which, when living, it was our duty to cultivate? It is not improbable

that our happiness in heaven may, in some measure, consist in the harmonious intercourse of a perfect society; for I have no idea of a solitary happiness even in the regions of perfection. Moreover, from what little accounts we find of the angelic state in the sacred writings, we see that the ideas of association and intercourse are always annexed to them. If then it is not to be doubted that in our future state we shall associate with some order of beings, can any thing be more probable than that we should mix with those kindred and congenial spirits who like ourselves have had their appointments on earth, whether in different times and places, or the same? If the same, which is still probable, and if the identity of our spiritual natures cannot be destroyed, why should not the characteristics of the soul be known in heaven as well as upon earth? I am willing to believe, at least, that the eternal Goodness will permit this future knowledge; and though we know too

little of the state of spirits to conceive the mode of their future communication, yet this we know, that it is in the power of God to permit what we wish for, and I trust that, in his kindness, he will permit it.

Then, O my Constantia! for that state of exalted friendship where the fears and frailties of mortality shall be known no more! for that happy intercourse of spiritual pleasures which shall be no longer subject to the influences of chance or time; which shall neither be oppressed by languor, nor disturbed by anxiety! Compared with that ineffable complacency, that sublime delight, which even the hope alone of these things inspires, what are the sufferings, however peculiar, that we have hitherto endured? Were there, indeed, no future state of being to commence after this, who would not wish to be thus agreeably deceived? Who would not wish to triumph over those gloomy apprehensions which the thought

of annihilation must necessarily create in a being to whom nature has given the love of existence?

But if the foretaste of future happiness be so great; if, when only contemplated through the imperfect medium of human imagination, it is capable of inspiring such exalted delight, how inconceivably great must the real and perfect enjoyment be! Let us here, my Constantia, indulge the utmost stretch of fancy; whatever an almighty and all-beneficent Being can give, and whatever our glorified faculties can receive, let us suppose our own. He that giveth not of his Spirit by measure, he that openeth his hand, and shutteth it not again, shall not he freely give us all things?

When I consider the wisdom and benevolence of that almighty Being through whose kindness I have hitherto been supported in life, like my Constantia, I can walk without trembling through the dark valley of the shadow of death. And whence, but from

the same consideration, could your tender and apprehensive heart derive that more than manly firmness which is visible in your letter? That information which you so kindly ascribe to my instructions, you have drawn from your own experience of the wisdom and the goodness of Providence; to whom your gratitude is due for the rectitude of reason, as well as for every other blessing you enjoy.

I will now no longer withhold your mind from the meditation of that glorious Being, whose more visible favours we shall shortly obtain. Indeed, my faculties are already too much confused for regular thinking, and death, I find, makes hasty paces towards me. Accept my last blessing.

"Bless, O God! O Father of Nature, bless my Constantia! support her gentle spirit under the conflict of death! and lead and conduct her by the light of thy countenance to thy everlasting rest!"

And now—Oh! now—farewell, my Con-

stantia!—my Constance! my sister! my friend! by every dear, and every holy name—farewell! I have conversed with you till the last moment—But—but we shall meet again.

Adieu!

THE END.

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